Eternal Torment

(Hell No)

Eternal Conscious Torment? (Hell No)

By Harry Farrell

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What does the Bible teach about Hell and Eternal Conscious Torment? Do the wicked suffer eternally in Hell? Is their suffering unending? In this paper, we're going to look at these questions and several others to determine what the Bible actually says about Hell and the destiny of the wicked. This is going to require us to look into several topics and doctrines such as the nature of God, the nature of man, the destiny of the wicked, and a few others.

However, before we start, we've got to have a set of objective rules by which we can determine what the Scriptures are saying. We call this a hermeneutic. All too often people don't have a hermeneutic and instead just kind of fly by the seat of their pants. What does this passage mean to me? That's not the correct way to interpret Scripture. We have to have an objective set of rules that doesn't change. Imagine a courtroom where the lawyers all got to interpret the law however they chose to. It would be chaos. Instead, there is a set of rules that everyone must abide by. It's no different with Scripture. If the rules are subjective everyone gets to choose

what something means. It's the same with Scripture. If everyone gets to choose what they think a verse means it's chaos. We can see that just by looking at Christianity today. There are so many different denominations. Everyone interprets the Scriptures as they see fit. That's not how we exegete Scripture. We need to have an objective set of rules. So, let's look at some rules that will lead us to a sound and valid understanding of Scripture.

9 Principles of Biblical Interpretation

1. **<u>The scriptures are infallible</u>**

I think most Christians believe the Scriptures are infallible. That is, when God gave His words to the prophets and apostles it was without error. I think that's a necessary belief because if we believe that God's word contains errors, we don't know what is true and what is error. However, that doesn't mean that any particular translation is infallible.

2. **<u>The Grammar</u>**

We can't transgress the grammar. This is often an issue. Many times, pastors and theologians will transgress the grammar. This can lead to erroneous understandings of Scripture. One example is the passage from 1 Peter 3:18-22 that says Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison. The participles in that passage require that Jesus did that after His resurrection. However, many Christians looking at that passage claim that Jesus' ghost preached to the spirits in prison while His body was in the grave. This is simply wrong as shown by the grammar. This is why we can't transgress the grammar.

3. **<u>Historical Setting</u>**

This is a really important point and it is one reason so many misunderstand the Bible. We've been taught, as Christians, to "Proof Text" the Bible. We're taught a doctrine and then we're shown this passage and that passage that are claimed to prove this doctrine. That's not the way to interpret Scripture. When we read Scripture, we should be asking, who is the author speaking to? What is the issue he is addressing? What was the historical setting? What did his words mean to the people he was addressing? As an example, I've heard quite a few people quote from Jeremiah where God says I know the plans I have for you. People quote this and say, "God has a plan for my life". That's not what the passage is saying. God was speaking of Jeremiah in that passage. He had plans for Jeremiah's

life. He was going to make him a prophet. This passage isn't saying anything about the lives of others.

4. Interpret the Bible in the Right Order (Progressively)

When we read and interpret Scripture it should be progressively, as God gave it. God started His revelation with Adam and Eve. Then He moved on to Abraham, David, the Prophets, and so on. Later He revealed his word to Jesus and the Apostles. So, when Jesus says something to the Jews or the apostles, we should understand it based on their knowledge at the time. For instance, Jesus spoke of the wicked being cast into Gehenna. However, If Jesus had spoken of the wicked being cast into the Lake of Fire His audience would have no idea of what He was talking about. They knew nothing of a Lake of Fire. That idea wouldn't come along until many years later when John wrote the Book of Revelation. So, we have to understand things the way His audience would have understood them.

5. Sound Logic

This is a big one. This is one that people miss time and time again. We cannot accept logical contradictions and be rational. In logic, if you allow one false proposition you can prove anything. So, we cannot accept a false proposition and still be logical or rational. All too often Christians do accept false propositions and thus end up with false conclusions. As an example, Calvinists hold to a doctrine that is found in the Westminster Confession. It says that God is in control of all things, yet He is not the author of sin. Well, that statement is a logical contradiction. God can't be in control of "all" things and yet not be in control of one of those things. In logic there is a law known as the Law of Noncontradiction, it states that two opposing things cannot both be true at the same time. Thus, God cannot be in control of "all" things and yet at the same time not be in control of one of those things. That violates the Law of Noncontradiction.

6. Agreement With God's Nature

The Bible tells us a good bit about God's nature. It tells us that God is, just, love, righteous, holy, and has other attributes. The doctrines we hold should align with the nature of God. If the Bible says something about God and our doctrine doesn't agree, then we really should investigate that doctrine to see why it doesn't agree with God's nature. There are quite a few Churches that teach doctrines that don't agree with God's nature. As an

example, going back to my previous statement about the Westminster Confession. They saw the conflict between their doctrine and God's nature. They said God controls all things. That presents a problem. If God controls all things and sin is a thing then it would mean that God controls sin. That would mean that God sins. The Bible tells us otherwise. This presented a problem for their doctrine, but, rather than jettison their doctrine they chose to accept a logical contradiction. That is that God is in control of all things, yet He is not the author of sin. As we just saw that is a logical contradiction. What they should have done was reject the idea that God controls all things. However, their entire theological system is built on this concept so they couldn't reject it without rejecting their entire theological construct.

7. Context

This is another really big point. This is one of the major reasons so many misunderstand Scripture. As I stated earlier, we've been taught to "Proof Text". We're taught to grab a passage here and a passage there and claim the Bible says xyz. As an example, I'll bet everyone reading this can recite John 3:16. But, let me ask you, can you recite John 3:15 or John 3:17? Probably not. We've been taught to pull passages from their context to make a point. However, every single verse of Scripture is a part of a bigger thought. The Bible isn't a book of one-liners. Every verse is part of something the author is conveying. If we use a passage of Scripture in a manner other than that intended by the author, we are using the passage out of context. An example of this is the passage I referenced earlier from Jeremiah where God said He had plans for Jeremiah. People take this passage and claim this means God has a plan for my life. But, that's not what the passage is saying. It's saying that God had a plan for Jeremiah's life. He planned to use him as a prophet. Taking passages of the Bible out of context may be the biggest problem we have in trying to understand the Scriptures.

8. Literal Teaching Has Priority Over Figurative Speech

We should always prioritize literal teaching over parables and figures of speech. Literal teaching is just that, literal. It means exactly what it says. On the other hand, figurative teaching such as parables, allegories, and metaphors, are open to interpretation. Different people may interpret them differently. Some may interpret them wrongly. Unless Jesus or an apostle explains a parable, we don't know for certain what it means. Sometimes when Jesus spoke a parable, He'd later explain it to His disciples. In this

case, we can know for certain what the parable means. However, He didn't always explain the parable. In this case, we should be careful not to put too much weight on the parable. A good example of this is the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. This is a parable that many Christians read literally. Jesus gave this parable, but we don't have the explanation given in Scripture. Therefore, we should be careful about forming our doctrines based on it.

9. **<u>Trace the History of the Development of Doctrines.</u>**

Finally, this one isn't really about interpretation; however, it is a good idea. Tracing doctrines back through history can show us where a certain doctrine began. If we can trace a doctrine back to the apostles, we can say it's a Biblical doctrine. If we find a doctrine that had its source in 300 AD, we can know that it's not a Biblical doctrine, but rather something that was added to the faith years later. For instance, there is a teaching that says Gehenna was a trash dump in the time of Jesus. However, we don't find any evidence of this until around the year 800 AD. We find nothing before 800 AD. that suggests that Gehenna was a trash dump. So, this idea most likely came into being well after New Testament times

Presuppositions

In addition to principles of interpretation, another thing we need to consider is our presuppositions. One of the things that really influences our understanding of Scripture is something called presuppositions. What are presuppositions? The definition of presupposition is, "a thing tacitly assumed beforehand at the beginning of a line of argument or course of action:" Basically, they are things we believe to be true that we don't question. We use them every day and they are gained as we experience life. For instance, when you go into a restaurant you pull out a chair and sit down at a table. Do you inspect the chair? Do you wiggle the legs to see if they are secure? Do you check the back to make sure it will support you? No, none of us do that. We simply pull out the chair and sit down. We have a presupposition, or we presuppose, that the chair will support us. Now suppose that when you went into a restaurant and sat down in the chair that it collapsed under you about 50 percent of the time. If that was the case, you'd check the chair each time you went into a restaurant to sit down. You'd have a different presupposition. You wouldn't automatically presuppose that the chair would hold you. We form these presuppositions based on our life experiences and things we are taught. So, how does this affect our understanding of Scripture? Let me ask you a question. Have you known, or do you know, anyone who knew nothing about Christianity, picked up a Bible, and became a Christian? Probably not. The vast majority of people who become

Christians are influenced by other Christians beforehand. Maybe they've had Christians witness to them or spend time with them looking at the Scriptures. Many have simply grown up in a Christian home or Christian environment. Maybe they started attending church for a while before becoming a Christian. There are many ways. However, in all of these instances they have had Christians influence them. By the time a Christian gets to studying the Scriptures for themselves, they've usually had many Christians/pastors/churches telling them what the "Bible says." This is just the way it's done. However, this also indoctrinates the New Christian with the beliefs and presuppositions of the Christians/pastors/churches that witness to/teach them. Then as these new Christians begin to study the Bible they look at the Scriptures through the same lens as those who taught them. We can see this well with seminaries. All the graduates of a particular seminary believe basically the same thing. It's like the seminaries are making clones. The typical argument for this is that they are all learning the Bible. That would be a good argument, and a logical one, if not for the fact that all of the seminaries produce graduates that believe very different things. Have you ever seen a Baptist Preacher come out of a Presbyterian seminary? It's not likely.

So, how does this affect our understanding of Scripture? Let's look at some of the presuppositions that people bring to the Scriptures. There is a Christian group called Unitarians. They believe that the Son of God didn't come into existence until Mary gave birth to Jesus. They don't believe that Jesus pre-existed. So, having that presupposition they have a problem when they come to John 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:1-3 KJV)

Because they don't believe that Jesus pre-existed, they are forced to interpret this passage in a way other than what would seem straight forward. To try to make this passage fit with their presupposition the try to make the "Word," in this passage, God's plan. In other words, it's not a person, it's God's plan. However, they run into another problem when John says, "by Him". This clearly indicates a person, not a plan. We have a similar situation with those of the reformed persuasion. They hold to the idea that God chose who would be saved and who wouldn't be. And, that He made this choice before He created anything. Having this presupposition, they run into trouble with passages that speak of God's wanting all to be saved.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:4 KJV)

Because they hold to this idea that God chose who would and wouldn't be saved prior to creation, they are forced to redefine the word "all." Often, you'll hear them say something like, all means, all of the elect. These are clear examples, they're easy to see. However, there are also instances where these presuppositions cause us to misinterpret Scripture in ways that we don't see. For instance, many Christians have been taught and hold as a presupposition that the church will be raptured out of the world before the "Great Tribulation." If this presupposition is correct, no worries. However, if it's incorrect, these people could be in for a lot of trouble. They won't be prepared if they're the generation that goes through it. Jesus said of that time that it was so bad that if the days had not been shortened even the elect wouldn't be saved. Imagine going through a time that is the worst possible and entering it completely unprepared. Another instance would be the head covering in 1 Corinthians 11. We're taught that Paul was addressing a cultural issue of his day. Because we have this presupposition, when we read this passage, we just kind of skip over it. After all, it was just something to do with that culture, right? Well, what if that presupposition is wrong? What if it's not a cultural issue? What if it's something we should be paying attention to and doing? Another example of a presupposition would be what we believe about what a man is. There are several ideas out there, however, the top two are that man immortal or mortal. One holds that some part of man is immortal and continues to live on after the body dies. The other holds that man is mortal and when he dies, he is dead. Which of these two beliefs we hold has a tremendous influence on our understanding of the Scriptures. For instance, those who hold that man is immortal see the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus and an actual event that took place and that it explains what happens to the righteous and the wicked at death. On the other hand, one who holds that man is mortal sees the parable as figurative and not literal. They see it as an allegory that is explaining some other truth. So, we two different groups looking at the same passage and drawing completely different ideas from it based on what they previously believed. What we come to the text believing definitely affects how we understand what we read. These presuppositions that we don't know are wrong are the ones that could be leading us into erroneous understandings of Scripture. This is why **it's imperative** that we **test our presuppositions** against the Scriptures. So, you see, the presuppositions we bring to the text greatly influence how we understand the Scriptures.

God's Nature

The first thing we should consider about Hell and the destiny of the wicked is how it portrays God's character and nature. Does God torment people? What is His nature? The Bible tells us that God is love.

[8] He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1 John 4:8 KJV)

God is love, however, He's also just. To show man His justice God gave the Israelites the Law. In the Law justice is described as, 'an eye for an eye.' It's equity. That leads us to ask, is it just to punish, in torment, the sinner for eternity when his sin is finite? If man's sin isn't eternal why would his punishment be eternal? Now, people have presented all kinds of ideas as to why the sinner should be tormented eternally. However, we need to ask ourselves, is this just? Is it a just punishment? If we look at God's justice in Scripture, we find that it's equity, 'an eye for an eye.' The most severe penalty we find is death. We don't find anything in Scripture where God said punishment was to be unending. What we find is that God says not to punish someone more than is necessary lest you humiliate him. This is justice to God. The penalty should fit the offense. We see that God required death for death.

[23] And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, [24] Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, [25] Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. [26] And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. [27] And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. (Ex 21:23–27 JKV)

So, if this is God's standard of justice why do we then say that the sinner will suffer eternal conscious torment? God has given us His standard, why do we hold some other idea? God said through Ezekiel, 'the soul that sins shall die.'

[4] Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Eze 18:4 KJV)

Here, God says the soul that sins shall die. According to the "Eternal conscious Torment" doctrine the soul that sins doesn't die, it suffers eternal torment. What are we to make of this discrepancy? God says one thing the doctrine something else. This doctrine calls God's character and integrity into question. Did God lie, or is this doctrine something we need to question? I think we'd all agree that God didn't lie. Therefore, we need to look at this doctrine more closely. That's what we're going to do in the rest of this paper.

What is Man?

The idea of Eternal Conscious Torment requires several things. First and foremost, it requires that man is able to continue to live on after death. The commonly held position is that man has an immortal soul that will live on after the body dies. This doctrine is known as the "Immortal Soul" It is thought that this soul will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell. The second most commonly held position is a doctrine known as "Conditional Immortality." This is the idea that man is mortal and can only live in a flesh body and can only live again through resurrection. Since the "Immortal Soul" doctrine is a basic requirement of the "Eternal Conscious Torment" doctrine, we will look at the Scriptures to see if this can be established and properly exegeted from the Scriptures. Firstly, we'll look at what a man is. Genesis 2:7 gives us the creation of man.

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. (Ge 2:7 KJV)

According to this passage, man was created from the dust. Science has established that our bodies contain the elements of the earth. Then we see that God breathed something into the man, this was His breath or spirit of life. The Hebrew word translated as breath in this passage is the word Neshemah and it literally means wind, by extension breath, and figuratively, spirit. Then we see that when these two, the man of dust and the breath of God, combined, there was a transformation that took place and the man became a living soul. From this, we can conclude that a living soul consists of two parts, the body of dust and the breath of God. Thus, we can logically conclude that when these parts separate the soul ceases to exist. We are told that when a man dies the body returns to the dust and the breath or spirit of life from God returns to Him.

because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 ***Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it****. (Ec 12:5–7 KJV)*

Since the two component parts are accounted for, the body returns to the dust and the breath or spirit returns to God, there is nothing left to live on. There are some who will claim that the spirit that returns to God is our "human" spirit. However, as we saw from Genesis 2:7 the only mention of a

breath or spirit in man was that of God Himself. There was no mention of anything called a "human spirit." We don't find anything in Scripture that speaks of a "human spirit." This idea entered the faith through Plato and Greek Philosophy. It was the Greeks who believed that man was an immaterial "soul" that was trapped in a flesh body. In this belief the flesh was inherently corrupt and it was the goal of man to escape the prison of the body and ascend into the heavens to be one with the Pleroma. The Pleroma was the fullness or the ultimate God. The Bible doesn't speak of a "human spirit." Quite often you'll also hear people use the words spirit and soul interchangeably. This is simply wrong. They are two completely different things.

Two Hebrew and two Greek words are translated, wind, breath, or spirit. They are Neshemah and Ruach in Hebrew and Pneuma and Noe in Greek. These words literally mean wind. They are translated as breath also because when we breathe, we create wind. They are also used figuratively and translated as spirit when the author is trying to impart the characteristics of wind to something.

Here are a few examples.

*[14] If he set his heart upon man, If he gather unto himself his **spirit** and his **breath**; [15]All flesh shall perish together, And man shall turn again unto dust. (Job 34:14–15 KJV)*

In this passage, the word translated spirit is ruach/pneuma and the word translated breath is neshamah/noe. Notice, too, that this passage is in agreement with our supposition that a living soul consists of the breath of God and the man, the body. Also, note that if God retrieves His breath/spirit all flesh would die. Again, this fits nicely with our supposition that a living soul is a body and the breath/spirit from God.

Now, let's look more closely at these words.

Ruach appears 387 times in the Old Testament and The Theological wordbook of the Old Testament gives the idea of "air in motion". apparently, it's from the root word ruh, which means to breathe.

Neshamah: The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament states that when used of man is it the breath of life. We find neshamah in Gen. 2:7 as the breath of life. In Isaiah 2:22 we find that neshamah, speaking of man, is the breath in his nostils.

The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, has two Greek words for these Hebrew words. They are pnoe, which is translated as Neshamah, and pneuma, which is translated for ruach.

pnoe: BDAG lists the meaning as, relatively rapid movement of air, wind (Hom. et al.; Job 37:10; TestSol; GrBar 2:1; ApcEsdr 5:23 p. 30, 26 Tdf. 'blowing of the wind'; SibOr 5, 375 [πνοιή]; Ar. 5, 4f [ἀνέμων]) πν. βιαία a strong wind Ac 2:2.
② the process of breathing, breath (Trag. et al.; LXX; TestReub 2:5; JosAs [also of things: William Arndt et al., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 838.

CWSD has a meaning, of 4157. πνοή pnoé; gen. pnoés, fem. noun from pnéō (4154), to breathe, blow. Wind, breath.

Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

The Theological Dictionary of the NT lists the definition as, Pneuma:
1. Wind. From a root denoting vital force acting as a stream of air, pneúma first means wind both in its movement and its rarefied materiality. The wind may be stormy, or a normal wind, or a breeze, or even a vapor. It has an effect on climate, health, and character, and is seen as both natural and divine.
2. Breath. A second sense of pneúma is breath, inhaled and exhaled in breathing, and ranging from snorting to the fading breath. Poetically pneúma denotes the sound that human breath produces by blowing on flutes etc.

Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 876.

As you can see, each of these words has as its basic meaning, wind. We say breath by extension because when we breathe, we are creating wind. These words are sometimes used in a figurative sense, a metaphor. When used that way they are translated spirit.

When these words are used as a metaphor, they are being used to portray the concept of one thing to another. For example, the phrase, "life is a beach" is a metaphor. We are using the word beach to apply some of those characteristics to life. We're saying that life is like a vacation on the beach. However, that doesn't change the meaning of life. The word life doesn't change its meaning and suddenly mean a beach. We're simply using

figurative language to describe life. That's how it is when these Greek and Hebrew words are translated as spirit, it's figurative language.

The problem we run into is that over time this figurative usage has found its way into the literal definition. People are now defining these words as a disembodied living being, a spirit, when they are simply used to describe a certain type of living being.

When you ask most people, "what is a spirit"? they'll say it's an immaterial bodiless being. In other words, a ghost. This meaning is being driven back into these Greek and Hebrew words. They mean no such thing. So, we're imposing this idea onto the Scriptures when in fact it is a figure of speech. This has caused a lot of confusion and erroneous beliefs.

The word "spirit" has many meanings. This is true in English, and also true in Hebrew (*ruach* [#07307, רוּחַ] = spirit) and Greek (*pneuma* [#4151 πνεῦμα] = spirit). The Greek noun *pneuma* comes from the verb *pneō*, "to blow or breathe." Thus, to the ancient Greeks, *pneuma* was "breath," and **it came to be associated with invisible things that exerted a force or power.** Although *pneuma* is a noun, it is a "verbal noun," (a noun that has the inherent characteristics of a verb or is grammatically related to a verb), so *pneuma* is always associated with the invisible power exercised by it. The word "wind" is a good example of an English noun that inherently is associated with action, although "wind" in English is not technically a verbal noun. There is no such thing as "wind" without action, even though "wind" is a noun—wind without action would be just "air." Similarly, *pneuma* is associated with its action or power. **In fact, a good basic definition of *pneuma*, "spirit," is something invisible that exerts a force.** That is why some of the things that are called "spirit" in the Greek language are: God (John 4:24); the gift of God known as holy spirit (Acts 2:38); angels (Heb. 1:14); demons (Matt. 8:28); "breath" or "life" (Luke 8:55); wind; and attitudes, thoughts, or emotions (Matt. 26:41). All of these things are invisible but exert force or power.

The Hebrew word for "spirit," *ruach*, also has a basic meaning of air in motion, but has a very large semantic range and can refer to many different things depending on the context, including God in motion ("the spirit of God moved…"); wind; breath; the gift of holy spirit God put upon some people in the Old Testament; good spirit beings, evil spirit beings, the natural life of our fleshly bodies that is sometimes referred to as "soul;" **the life force that will animate resurrected bodies;** and the activities of the mind including people's thought, attitudes, and emotions.

Appendix 6: Usages of "Spirit", REV Bible and Commentary (revisedenglishversion.com)

This is a good explanation of how these Greek and Hebrew words are used figuratively as spirit. The word became associated with something invisible that exerted a force or power. This is the definition of wind. It is invisible and it exerts a force or power. This is also true of God; He is invisible and exerts both force and power. However, we know that God is not literally moving air. Thus, spirit is a figurative usage of the word. It is also true of angels and demons; they are invisible and they exert a force or power.

In English, the word spirit carries the idea of a disembodied living being. These Hebrew and Greek words are used for invisible beings, however, invisible being isn't the definition. The words are being used as a figure of speech. They're used of invisible beings because those beings are invisible and exert a force or power. A good example of this is Jesus' statement in John 3:8.

8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:8 KJV)

In this passage, both words, wind and Spirit, are pneuma. We can see in this passage that the translators understand both a literal and a figurative usage. When it says the wind blows, it's a literal translation, and when it speaks of one being born of the Spirit, it is figurative. We know that people aren't born of moving air. However, they are born by the power or force of God.

Breath as Neshamah:

*[7] And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a living soul. (Gen. 2:7 KJV)*

*[22] All in whose nostrils was the **breath of life**, of all that was in the dry land, died. (Gen. 7:22 KJV)*

Breath as Ruach:

*[17] And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the **breath of life**, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. (Gen. 6:17 KJV)*

*[15] And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the **breath of life**. (Gen. 7:15 KJV)*

Breath as Pneuma:

[11]And after three days and an half the **Spirit of life** from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. (Rev. 11:11 KJV)

That these words neshamaah and ruach can be used interchangeably can be seen in what are called Parallelisms. The Hebrew language uses parallelisms in some of the poetic books, such as Psalms and Job. A Parallelism is where a writer makes a statement and then restates the same thing using different words. I'd like to look at a few of these passages so we can get a better understanding of these words. I'll color-code them so you can see which word is which.

Neshamah
Ruach

[2]As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul;
*[3]All the while my **breath** is in me, and the **spirit** of God is in my nostrils;*
[4]My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. (Job 27:2-4 KJV)

*[5] Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth **breath** unto the people upon it, and **spirit** to them that walk therein: (Isa. 42:5 KJV)*

We also find that this breath is the source of life. In the book of Job, we find these words.

*[14] If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his **spirit** and his **breath**; [15] All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. (Job 34:14-15 KJV)*

Paul also tells us this in his letter to Timothy.

*[13]I give thee charge in the sight of **God, who quickeneth all things**, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;*
[14]That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1 Tim. 6:13-14 KJV)

[24]God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; [25]Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, ***seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*** *(Acts 17:24-25 KJV)*

What's interesting here is that Paul uses pnoe, and not pneuma. this is equivalent to the Hebrew Neshamah that we saw in Gen 2:7 when God breathed into man, the breath of life. We Can see here that Paul is referring back to the breath of life that was given to Adam. And, as we've seen in the previous verses this breath belongs to God. If He chose to retrieve it all flesh would die and return to the dust. To show this breath belongs to God let's look at the passage of the "Valley of Dry Bones". In Ezekiel 37. we find a discussion and prophecy between God and Ezekiel. God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to a valley of dry bones.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the ***spirit*** *of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause* ***breath*** *to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put* ***breath*** *in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no* ***breath*** *in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the* ***wind****, prophesy, son of man, and say to the* ***wind****, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four* ***winds****, O* ***breath****, and* ***breathe*** *upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the* ***breath*** *came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put* ***my spirit*** *in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

(Eze 37:1-14 KJV)

This is a beautiful picture of the Resurrection. There's one point here that is critical to our discussion. In this passage, the words, breath, wind, and spirit, are all the same Hebrew word, ruach. The word breathe is translated from the word naphach which is the verb form of neshamah that we find in Gen 2:7. What we see here is a repeating of what we saw in Gen 2:7. God created man from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living soul. What's critical in this passage though is that God gives Ezekiel the interpretation of the vision. God says He will put His spirit or breath in them and they shall live. So we see that it is God's breath that causes them to live. If there was a "human spirit" in man, we would expect to see it in this passage. We would expect to see God putting it in man and yet there is no mention whatsoever of any other spirit/breath put in man. It is only God's breath/spirit that we see in man and that breath/spirit is what is giving him life.

This breath not only gives man life but also enables him to function.

But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty ***gives him understanding****. (Job 32:8 NKJ)*

The Spirit of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty ***hath given me life****. (Job 33:4 KJV)*

[24] God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
[25] Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, ***seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things****;*
(Acts 17:24-25 KJV)

The following is from the Ancient Hebrew Research Center.

"The Hebrew word נשמה (*neshamah*, Strong's #5397) is formed by adding the letters מ (*m*) and ה (*h*) to the word שם (*shem*). This word is used in Genesis 2:7 and means "breath."

And the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and he blew in his nostrils the breath (נשמה) *of life and the man became a living soul.*

While the Western mind simply sees "breath" as the exchange of air within the lungs, the ancient Hebrew mind understood the "breath" in an entirely

different way as can be seen in Job 32:8: *The wind within man and the breath* (נשמה) *of the Almighty teach them.*

Our Western understanding of the breath does not easily grasp the concept that a breath can teach. While our Western understanding can easily associate thoughts and emotions as the function of the "mind", the Easterner sees the same function in the "breath". The "breath" of both men and God has the ability to carry thought and emotion."

Earlier we saw that for the ancient Hebrews these words, neshamah and ruach, came to mean something invisible that exerts a force. We can see where this idea of an invisible force from God that teaches and gives man all of his abilities comes from. Our ability to think, laugh, cry, walk, run, etc. They all come from God via this breath.

Soul

If you ask several people what the soul is, you'll get several different answers. Some will say it's the will. Some will say it's the emotions. Some will say other things. The Greeks in Jesus' day said the soul was an immaterial part of man. But, what does the Bible say the soul is? I think one reason why there is so much confusion about what the soul is, is that in our English Bibles, the translators have used several different words to translate this concept. The Hebrew word translated soul is Nephesh and the Greek word is Psuche. The King James version translates the Hebrew word Nephesh using 11 different English words.

soul, self, life, creature, person, appetite, mind, living being, desire, emotion, and passion.

Then add to that in the Greek New Testament the words, heart, mind, doubt, you, and him. With one word being translated with so many English words, it's no wonder it's hard to follow this concept.

As Christians we should understand the soul the same way the Bible does. So, Let's look and see what the Bible calls the soul.

There are two different words for soul. They are, Nephesh in Hebrew and Psuche in Greek. These words are used in two different senses. In a concrete sense, they mean a living being. However, they are also used in an abstract sense. When used this way they are usually translated, life. In Genesis 2:7 we have Nephesh/Psuche used in a concrete sense of a living being.

We've seen Nephesh/Psuche used in a concrete sense in Genesis 2:7 Here is an example of it being used in an abstract sense.

For the **life** of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your **souls**: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the **soul**
(Le 17:11 KJV)

The word "life" in this passage is nephesh. The word souls is the same, nephesh. This passage could be translated, "For the soul of the flesh is in the blood." The translators understand it in an abstract way where it's translated life.
Let's look at some passages of scripture that use the word soul to see how they use it. I think one of the passages that best defines the word Nephesh or soul is Genesis 2:7 which reads,

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **became** a **living soul.** (Gen. 2:7 KJV)

The New King James Version renders it this way.

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **became** a **living being.*** (Gen 2:7 NKJ)

Here we have Moses defining what a soul is. He says God created the man from the dust of the ground. Man consists of the elements of the earth. Then Moses adds that God breathed into the man the breath of life, and the man became a living soul. From this we can deduce that a soul consists of a body and the breath of life from God. God breathed something of himself into the man and the man became a soul. As the New King James renders it, the man became a living being. But we notice too that Moses said the man became a "Living Soul." Again, what we'll find as we search the Scriptures is that this idea of Nephesh or Psuche, translated Soul, is used in two senses. In a concrete sense, it is a living being. In an abstract sense, it is used of life itself and it is often translated as life. So, let's look and see how the Bible uses this word, Soul. We'll start with Genesis since it and Job are the two oldest books. Where better to get the definition of soul than from the foundational books of the Bible? In the following passages all of the **bolded** words are Nephesh in the Old Testament and Psuche in the New Testament.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature **that hath** life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. (Gen 1:20 KJV)

And God created great whales, and every living **creature** that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:21 KJV)

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living **creature**, that was the name thereof. (Gen 2:19 KJV)

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living **creature** of all flesh that is upon the earth. (Gen 9:16 KJV)

What about the New Testament, will we find the same thing?

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your **life**, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the **life** more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Mat 6:25 KJV)

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his **life** a ransom for many. (Mat 20:28 KJV)

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your **souls**. (Mat 11:29 KJV)

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his **life** for the sheep. (John 10:11 KJV)

In the following passages we'll see how Nephesh or Psuche, Soul, is used of life itself.

KJV But flesh with the **life** thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. (Gen 9:4 KJV)

And surely your blood of your **lives** will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the **life** of man. (Gen 9:5 KJV)

For it is the **life** of all flesh; the blood of it is for the **life** thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh:

for the **life** of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off. (Lev 17:14 KJV)

And thine eye shall not pity; but **life** shall go for **life**, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deut. 19:21 KJV)

Do we find this same thing continuing in the New Testament?

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own **soul**? (Mk. 8:36KJV)

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the **soul**: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both **soul** and body in hell. (Mat 10:28 KJV)

He that loveth his **life** shall lose it; and he that hateth his **life** in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. (Jn. 12:25 KJV)

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his **life** for us: and we ought to lay down our **lives** for the brethren. (1 John 3:16 KJV)

As we can see from these passages, these words are used of a living being in a concrete sense and as life in an abstract sense.

I think we can see from the following passages that the concept of soul is used to denote the whole person.

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for **you**; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. (2 Cor 12:15 KJV)

This passage is interesting because the King James version renders Psuche as doubt and not soul.

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to **doubt**? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.
(John 10:24 KJV)

The translation of doubt seems a little odd. Young's Literal translation helps clear up the confusion.

the Jews, therefore, came round about him, and said to him, 'Till when our **soul** dost thou hold in suspense? if thou art the Christ, tell us freely.'
(John 10:24 YLT)

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the **soul**, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mk 12:32-33 KJV)

From this we can see that the soul denotes the whole person. While Genesis 2:7 tells us that the man and the breath of God became a living soul, I think it implies that it is more than just an animated body. Rather it's the entirety of man, the whole man. Man or a soul is more than just a body. He has the capacity to reason, he has emotions, he has the ability to be creative, etc. These capabilities come from the breath of life that God breathed into the man. Job tells us that understanding comes from the breath of God. The New King James Version renders it this way.

But there is a spirit in man, And **the breath of the Almighty** gives him understanding. (Job 32:8 NKJ)

The word translated breath in this passage is the Hebrew word Neshamah. It's the same word that is used in Genesis 2:7 where it says God breathed into the man the breath of life and the man became a living soul. So, the same breath that gives man life also gives him understanding.

9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? 10 **In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind**. (Job 12:9-10 KJV)

Notice here in this passage the word soul. Every living soul is in the hand of the Lord. He also says, "and the breath of all mankind". God holds the very breath of our souls in His hand.

If we had any question about what we saw in Genesis 2:7, Job confirms it right here.

The **Spirit** of God hath made me, and the **breath** of the Almighty hath given me life. (Job 33:4 KJV)

Again, the word breath in this passage is neshamah.

[14] If he set his heart upon man, *if* he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; [15] All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. (Job 34:14-15 KJV)

In these passages the word spirit is translated from the word ruach and the word breath is translated from the word neshamah.

There are many more passages we could look at, but, I think what we can draw from this is that concretely, the soul is a living being that consists of the Breath of Life or the Neshamah of life from God and the man or body created from the dust. The Neshamah of life is what gives man life and the ability to understand and reason. In an abstract sense, the soul is life itself. Both body and life are tied together in the soul.

Now that we've looked at the creation of man and both the breath/spirit and the soul lets consider that the doctrine of Eternal conscious Torment requires that man lives on in some form after the body dies. It requires that man is immortal. However, as we've seen so far that isn't possible. Let's look at the doctrine of the Immortal Soul.

The Immortal Soul

So, we see from the creation account of man that it's not possible for man to live on after the body dies. However, does the Bible say more? The doctrine that is probably the most held among Christians is the doctrine of the "Immortal Soul." It's claimed that man has an immortal soul that will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell. Well, as we've seem, the creation account of man doesn't seem to fit with this idea. What about the rest of Scripture? Does man truly have an immortal soul? The idea that man will suffer eternal torment in Hell is premised on this doctrine, that being, the "Immortal Soul" doctrine. This is a doctrine that entered the faith from Greek Philosophy. In Jesus' day one of the, if not the primary, beliefs among the Greeks was that of Plato who posited that souls were immortal and the goal of the soul was to escape the prison of the body and ascend into the heavens. This concept is still alive and well today. The question then becomes, is man immortal? Well, that's an easy question to answer. The answer is no! The apostle Paul makes that abundantly clear.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;
14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of **our Lord Jesus Christ:** 15 Which in his times **he shall shew**, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;
16 **Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; **whom no man hath seen, nor can see**: to whom be

honour and power everlasting. Amen. (Ti 6:12–16 KJV)

Here Paul tells us that the only one who has immortality is the Father, the one no man has seen, nor can see. No other being has immortality. That includes men.

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of **God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds**: 7 **To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life**: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile (Ro 2:5–9 KJV)

Here Paul states that those who continue to do well are seeking immortality or eternal life. Obviously, if they are seeking immortality, they don't already possess it.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, **that mortality might be swallowed up of life.** (2 Co 5:1–4 KJV)

In this passage, Paul speaks of their current state, mortal, not immortal.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and **this mortal** must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and **this mortal** shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
(1 Co 15:53–54 KJV)

"This mortal" is a state of being. Man is mortal, not immortal. He "is" flesh, mortal.

3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with **man, for that he also is flesh:** yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.
(Ge 6:3 KJV)

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: **for dust thou art,** and unto dust

shalt thou return. (Ge 3:19 KJV)

"For thou art dust" Again, a state of being. This alludes back to Genesis 2:7.

7 And the LORD God **formed man of the dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **<u>became</u>** a living soul. (Ge 2:7 KJV)

We can see from these passages of Scripture that man is not immortal. He doesn't have an immortal soul. These passages align nicely with what we found in the creation account. When the breath of life from God leaves the body, there is nothing left to live on. Thus, man's soul is not immortal.

So far, we've established that man's soul consists of two parts, and when those two parts separate the soul no longer exists. We've also established that man does not have an immortal soul, but rather that he is dust enlivened by the breath of God.

Another way we know that man is not immortal is from the words of the apostle Paul. He says God is currently giving life to all things.

13 I urge you in the sight of **God who gives life to all things,** and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. (1 Ti 6:13–16 NKJ)

Here Paul uses the present tense, God gives. Thus, showing that it is an ongoing process in which God is giving life to all things. This shows beyond doubt that man is not immortal. He is kept alive, every minute, by God giving him life.

If he set his heart upon man, **If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;**15 **<u>All flesh shall perish together,</u> <u>And man shall turn again unto dust.</u>** (Job 34:14–15 KJV)

As we see here, too, if God retrieves His spirit/breath all flesh would die and man would return to the dust. Thus, man is not immortal. Not only is man not immortal, but he depends on God for every breath he takes.

Given that man is not immortal, but rather flesh, and will die and return to the dust, it is not possible that he could suffer eternally. The only way that man could suffer enterally is if he was immortal. Since all life is given and supported by God, the only way a man can be immortal is if God makes him immortal, ie. gives him eternal life. However, as we see in Scripture, eternal life is a gift of God to the believer. Nowhere in Scripture are the wicked ever promised eternal life, nowhere. Since the wicked are not promised eternal life from God, and God is the only source of it, we can logically conclude that the wicked cannot possibly suffer eternal conscious torment.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, **that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** (Jn 3:16 KJV)

Here John tells us that everlasting life is for those who believe. It's contrasted with perishing.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God is eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Ro 6:23 KJV)

Here Paul tells us that the gift of God is eternal life. We don't see this gift promised to the unbeliever. But, does the Bible really support this idea? If man is not an immortal soul and only the believer receives eternal life, what happens to the wicked?

The Destiny of the Wicked

Psalm 37 contrasts the destiny of the righteous and the wicked. Here are a few examples.

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. [2]For **they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.** (Ps 37:1–2 KJV)

The wicked will be cut down and wither away.

For evildoers shall be cut off: But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Ps 37:9KJV)

For evildoers shall be cut off. This is contrasted with those who wait on the Lord. They shall inherit the earth or the land. Jesus quoted this passage. This is the promise of the Abrahamic covenant. It is Christ's inheritance and

as heirs, it is the Christian's inheritance. Those who are in Christ will inherit the earth.

Again,

[10]For yet a little while, and **the wicked *shall* not *be***: Yea, thou shalt diligently consider **his place, and it *shall* not *be***. [11]But **the meek shall inherit the earth**; And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. (Ps 37:10–11 KJV)

Again, for the wicked nonexistence, for the meek, the Abrahamic covenant.

The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: And their inheritance shall be for ever. (Ps 37:18 KJV)

Again, the inheritance of the righteous is the Abrahamic covenant. The everlasting land inheritance. But the wicked shall perish.

[20]But the wicked shall perish, And the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs: They shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. (Ps 37:20 KJV)

They shall perish and fade away as smoke. Again,

[22]For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; And *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.(Ps 37:22 KJV)

For the righteous, the inheritance, the Abrahamic covenant. The wicked, they will be cut off.

Again,

But **the seed of the wicked shall be cut off**. **[29]The righteous shall inherit the land,** And dwell therein for ever. (Ps 37:28–29 KJV)

Again,

[34]Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*. (Ps 37:34 KJV)

This passage is interesting because it tells us when the righteous will inherit the land. It's when the wicked are cut off.

These are just a few passages from one Psalm that contrast the destiny of the righteous and the wicked. The apostle John contrasts these destinies also.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (Jn 3:16 KJV)

The contrast John gives us is that of eternal life versus perishing. This is the same thing we saw from David in Psalm 37. The wicked were cut off, they faded away as smoke. John says they will perish. The apostle Paul also contrasts these destinies for us.

23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Ro 6:23 KJV)

Paul says, "the wages of sin is death." On the other hand the gift of God is eternal life. He contrasts death with life. It's eternal life as we saw from David, it's forever. Paul speaks of vessels fitted for destruction.

What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: (Ro 9:22 KJV)

Those whose end is destruction.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 **Whose end *is* destruction**, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Php 3:17–19 KJV)

Peter speaks of those who bring destruction upon themselves.

2 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and **bring upon themselves swift destruction**. (2 Pe 2:1 KJV)

How many of them have to tell us the destiny of the wicked? We have it from God, David, Paul, Peter, and John. The penalty for sin is death. We have an example in the very beginning of the Bible from no less than God Himself.

God told Adam if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge he would die. Adam disobeyed God and sinned and what happened? He died. Some claim that Adam didn't die that day so it must be some other kind of death. However, there is no other kind of death than the cessation of life. That this is the death that God had in mind can be seen in Genesis chapter 3.

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and **hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it**: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.** (Ge 3:17–19 KJV)

God told Adam that because he ate of the tree he would return to the dust because out of it he was taken. This alludes back to Genesis 2:7. To accomplish this God places a guard to the Tree of Life so that Adam couldn't access it.

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Ge 3:22–24 KJV)

Adam lost access to the Tree of Life and as such was subject to death, the cessation of life. So, from the very beginning of Scripture, we have the penalty for sin, it is death. It's the same thing the prophets and apostles said it was. The penalty for sin is death.

So why then, if it's so clear that the penalty for sin is death, do so many believe the doctrine of "Eternal Conscious Torment?" The short answer is that it was a belief among the pagans that the soul lived on after the body. The pagans believed that the soul was immortal. So, it had to be somewhere. For most Christians there are only two locations, Heaven and Hell. If Hell is a place of torment, as some passages seem to imply, and the soul is eternal, then it follows that the soul would suffer eternally in Hell. This idea entered the church. As time went on and things got farther from the time of Jesus and the apostles, we began to see more and more Gentiles entering the faith and fewer Jews. These Gentiles naturally had different

presuppositions than the Jews had. The Gentiles then began to filter and understand the Scriptures through these presuppositions. They began to understand the Scripture differently than the Jews had because the Jews didn't have the presuppositions that the Gentiles had. Over time we can see things in the faith begin to change. One of these was the introduction of the idea of an immortal soul into the faith. We can see where these different ideas began to enter and influence the faith. After certain political events that took place, the Catholic Church essentially became the sole repository of the Scriptures in Western Society for about a millennium. It wasn't until the Reformation that this hold on the Scriptures in the West was broken. During all of that time, the same ideas were perpetuated. Even many of the Reformers didn't change this doctrine. So, it just continued on. Today, however, we have many more copies and fragments of Scripture to work with, not to mention many ancient Christian documents to consider as we look at the Scriptures. One thing that happened through the centuries was that when someone challenged what was considered orthodox there was a major backlash. People were shunned and banned from society. They were called heretics and some were even killed. The church didn't like its power being challenged. As would be expected these actions put a damper on people challenging the powers that be. If one disagreed, they'd often just keep it to themselves so as not to be disconnected from their head. William Tyndale was burned at the stake for heresy. Just because he disagreed with the Church and was translating the Bible into English. You can imagine that would tend to silence all but the most ardent critics. After the Reformation Christian colleges began to form and of course denominations. As these colleges or seminaries began to form, they also began to promote their particular denominational positions. However, since all of these denominations had as their source, Catholicism, many still held to this idea of an immortal soul. It wasn't until after the Reformation of the 1500s that people could begin to safely (and I use that term loosely) challenge what was considered orthodox. Actually, it's only been in the last few centuries, since about the 1800's, that real strides have been made. Today one can challenge the status quo without fear of execution. However, the ostracizing and shunning of such individuals continues. If you challenge the status quo today you had better be a strong individual because you will be shown the right foot of fellowship often.

So, those seminaries that came out of the Reformation held onto this doctrine of the Immortal Soul and as such, the doctrine of Eternal Conscious Torment. And so, they just perpetuated the same teaching over and over and over. The seminary produces someone believing the same things. That

person goes out and teaches the same things. Then the people taught by that person go out and teach the same things. It's not hard to see how these doctrines have been able to remain down through the ages. Add to that the fact that anyone who challenges said doctrines is going to be ostracized and shunned. Most people don't like being shunned so they keep quiet. A lot of people who have spent many thousands of dollars at these schools are usually not too interested in changing their views. It becomes like an echo chamber where everyone just repeats what everyone else says. Then when we come to the Scriptures and they don't agree with what everyone says, well, we just change the Scriptures. That's the short answer to how we got from the penalty for sin being death to the penalty for sin being eternal torment. But, if we're going to be like the Bereans that Paul spoke to, we have to, search the Scriptures to see if those things are true.

[10] And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. [11] These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.** (Ac 17:10–11 KJV)

We need to be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures to see if these things are true.

Aion

So, if the penalty for sin is death and we can see where this idea of eternal torment entered the faith why do our English translations seem to imply that the penalty is eternal torment? The reason for that is something known as translator bias. In order to translate something, you have to know what it says. So, the translator has to understand the text. Well, the vast majority of translators believe that the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment. Given that fact how would we expect them to translate the Scriptures? Would it not be in a way that supports the idea of eternal conscious torment? It would. Remember, the seminaries produce those who think just like they do. So, they believe the penalty is eternal torment. Now, there are some who see the problems that we've discussed, but keep in mind the issue of being ostracized and shunned. So, it's not likely that there will be a big push to get rid of these doctrines from academia. To give an example of translator bias we can use the Greek word "aion." Its equivalent is the Hebrew word olam. These words are often translated as eternal, everlasting, or forever. But there are a lot of places where this definition is clearly wrong. I'll give a quick example.

[3] And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the **world**? (Mt 24:3 KJV)

In this passage, the word "world" is the Greek word aion. The apostles are asking about the end of the aion. This word is usually translated eternal or everlasting. Why did the translators change from their typical definition of everlasting to the word world? Well, it's pretty obvious why they changed it. Their definition doesn't work with the text. Were the disciples asking Jesus about the end of eternity? Well, there's a problem there. Eternity, by definition doesn't end. If it ends, it's not eternity. So, to avoid the problem they simply changed the word to world.

What this shows us is that the definition of eternity simply isn't correct. Something that ends cannot be eternal. Now, you'll hear all kinds of explanations trying to get around this problem. But the bottom line is that something that ends cannot be eternal. So, we've got to find a way to understand this word aion in such a way that it fits and makes sense in every passage it appears in. The New King James version actually does a much better job of defining this word.

[3] Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the **end of the age?"** (Mt 24:3 NKJ)

The NKJ here translates aion as age, not world or everlasting. Age is the best translation of this word as it works everywhere the word appears. Let's look at how we can understand these words aion and olam in such a way that the definitions fit with every occurrence in Scripture.

One of the issues that causes much confusion and problems in understanding the Scriptures is the mistranslation of these two words. The Greek word "aion" and the Hebrew word "olam." Again, in our English Bibles, these words are often translated as everlasting. This causes quite a bit of confusion. The reason is that there are many times in the Bible where these words are used for things that are not everlasting. This causes Christians to try to make doctrines fit with Scripture when they clearly don't. Words can have different meanings, but they can't have opposing meanings. Imagine trying to communicate if we had one word that meant both yes and no. Let's suppose we had such a word and we called it "xyz". Now imagine someone asking, "Did you go to the store?" You answer, "xyz". Has this answered the person's question? No, they still don't know if you went to the store because your answer could mean one of two things. Either, yes, you went to the

store, or no, you didn't go to the store. Such a word would be useless for communication. Well, that's what we have with these two words. Theologians have translated these words to have opposing meanings. I'm going to post several passages showing the issue here.

13 And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. 14 And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: 15 And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. (Exod. 40:13-15 KJV)

In this passage, in our English translations, it says that the priesthood of Aaron would be an everlasting priesthood. This is the Old Testament priesthood. Is it eternal? Let's ask the apostle Paul.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? 12 **For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law**. 13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. 14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, 16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. 17 For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. (Heb 7:11-18 KJV)

According to the apostle Paul, the old priesthood has ended. He says that the priesthood was changed. The old priesthood was part of the Law of Moses. Notice Paul said there is a disannulling of the commandment going before. If the Old Law ended then so did the old priesthood. Why then do our English translators say that it is an everlasting priesthood? If it ends it cannot be everlasting. There are many passages like this.

33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. 34 And this shall be an **everlasting statute** unto you, to make

an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses. (Lev. 16:33-34 KJV)

In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which *is* before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: *it shall be* a **statute for ever** unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel. (Exod. 27:21 KJV)

And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy *place*; that they bear not iniquity, and die: *it shall be* a **statute for ever** unto him and his seed after him. (Exod. 28:43 KJV)

All of these ordinances are said to be forever in our English Bibles, yet Paul said the Law and the priesthood was changed. He also said that Christ abolished the Law.

[13] But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. [14] For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; [15] Having **abolished** in his flesh the enmity, *even* **the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; (Eph 2:13–15 KJV)

So, again, how can olam/aion mean eternal when these things ended? Is this something we only see in the Old Testament? No, it's not. We see Jesus and the apostles also speaking of the end of the olam/aion.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this **world**, neither in the *world* to come. (Matt. 12:32 KJV)

In this passage, the translators have translated the Greek word "aion", which they often translate as everlasting, as world. Why would they do that? Why change it from everlasting to world? Well, they can't make everlasting work in the passage. They can't say, "Neither in this everlasting/eternity, neither in the everlasting/eternity to come. That doesn't make any sense. If there is an eternity to come, that must mean that this present one will end. If that's the case then it's not eternal. Instead of fixing the glaring problem, they change the definition of the word. The New King James actually translates this passage correctly.

"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come. (Matt. 12:32 NKJ)

It translates it, as "either in this age or the in the age to come." Age is the correct definition of the Hebrew olam and the Greek aion. This is the only way the definition fits all of the places these words occur in Scripture.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this **world, neither in the *world* to come**. (Matt 12:32 KJV)

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in **the world to come** eternal life. (MK 10:32 KJV)

Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in **the world to come** life everlasting. (LK 18:30 KJV)

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection **the world to come**, whereof we speak. (Heb 2:5 KJV)

[4]For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, [5]And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of **the world to come**, [6]If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame. (Heb. 6:4-6 KJV)

Each of these passages speaks of an aion to come. The word "world" is the Greek word aion. If it means eternity how can there be an eternity to come? If time ends, then it can't be eternal. That's why aion cannot mean eternal. However, it can mean an age. Neither in this age nor the age to come. Consider these passages.

"The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is **the end of the age**, and the reapers are the angels. (Matt. 13:39 NKJ)

"So it will be at **the end of the age**. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, (Matt. 13:49 NKJ)

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of **the end of the age?**" (Matt. 24:3 NKJ)

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at **the end of the ages**, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. 9:26 NKJ)

In these passages, we have Jesus, the apostles, and Paul all speaking of the end of the aion. So, if aion means everlasting or eternal, how do they speak of the end of eternity? The end of the everlasting? That can't be. By definition, eternity doesn't end. Thus, there cannot be an end of the eternity. Yet, they all indicate that the aion does end. Again, this shows that aion cannot mean eternal. It must be understood as an age.

Ok, so if olam/aion cannot mean eternal what are we to make of eternal life? Does this mean that aionios (the adjective form of aion) life means life for an age? Isn't the life eternal? Well, since aion/aionios cannot mean eternal, then the phrase aionios life, does not mean (by definition) eternal life. If we're going to determine the length of the aionios (age enduring) life we have to determine the length of the age. Is there another way we can determine the length of the life? Can we determine the length without using the word aion? Yes, we can. And this is the key to the issue. We have the words from Jesus Himself.

[34]And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. [35]"But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; [36]"**nor can they die anymore**, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. (Lk. 20:34-36 NKJ)

This is a crucial passage. Firstly, note that Jesus speaks of two different ages. Two different aions. This one and the one to come. Again, showing that aion cannot mean eternity. He says those who are counted worthy to attain "that age", the one to come, and the resurrection from the dead, die no more. So, those who attain the coming age, die no more. This is eternal life. In that coming age, those who have been counted worthy will not die anymore. Since this life is then eternal, it seems that that age is also eternal. In this passage, we have the life defined as eternal without using the word aion/aionios. They die no more is eternal life. So, now that we know that this age of life is eternal because they die no more, we can conclude that when the Scriptures are speaking of aionios life, that life is

eternal, but, not because it is aionios, but because they die no more. Again, aion/aionios means an age. Aionios life is only eternal IF the aion is eternal.

This shows us how we can understand all of the uses of olam/aion in the Scriptures without having contradictions such as the Aaronic priesthood being said to be forever when Scripture clearly shows that it ended. We can see that when Scripture says that the statutes of the Mosaic Law were olam/aionios, they were for an age and not forever as our English Bibles wrongly translate them. The Scriptures clearly show that they ended.

Some may say, well, what does it matter if the life is eternal? Why it matters is because we can correctly understand God's word. When we go through life with seeming contradictions it can plant seeds of doubt in our minds. It can cause confusion. When we understand it correctly, we can explain it to others when they present a seeming contradiction.

There may be some who question whether or not what I said here is correct. To show that it is here are two links to ancient Hebrew sites. These sites both deal with the word Olam. Aion is the equivalent word in the Greek.

Hebrew Word Definition: Ancient | AHRC (ancient-hebrew.org)

How long is forever? (jewishroots.net)

You'll notice that the Hebrew language had no word that compares to the English, forever. To express the concept of forever in Hebrew they used a phrase such as, without end, or as we saw with eternal life, "die no more." However, as we can see, the word Olam does not indicate eternity as the English forever does.

This issue with olam and aion is huge in Scripture because many passages speak of things that are said to be forever, when they aren't. Quite a few of them are the basis for this idea of eternal torment. We're going to look at many of these passages and break them down to see how they can be understood in a way where olam and aion are properly understood.

So far, we've established that a soul cannot exist without a body. We've established that the penalty for sin is death. And, we've established that olam and aion cannot mean eternity. So far we've established through three different paths that the doctrine of eternal conscious torment is not what the Bible teaches. As we continue, let's look at Hell itself. What is it?

Hell

There are actually three different locations in Scripture that are translated Hell in the King James Bible. They are, Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus. Tartarus is a location reserved for angels so that has no bearing on our discussion. That leaves us with Hades and Gehenna. Hades is often translated as the grave. I would argue that it should always be translated as the grave. Gehenna, also known as the Valley of Hinnom, and Tophet, is a valley located just outside of Jerusalem. Jeremiah speaks of it.

[29] Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. [30] For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. [31] And they have built the high places of **Tophet**, which *is* in **the valley of the son of Hinnom**, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart. [32] Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called **Tophet**, nor **the valley of the son of Hinnom**, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in **Tophet**, till there be no place. [33] And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray *them* away. [34] Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate. (Je 7:29–34 KJV)

Isaiah also speaks of Tophet.

[33]For Tophet *is* ordained of old; Yea, for the king it is prepared; He hath made *it* deep *and* large: The pile thereof *is* fire and much wood; The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. (Is 30:33 KJV)

Jesus speaks of Gehenna quite a bit. He indicates that this is the place where the wicked will be burned.

[43] And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: [44] Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mk 9:43–44 KJV)

The word hell in this passage is the word Gehenna. He uses it several times in this passage in Mark. When He speaks of Gehenna He says, the fire is not

quenched and the worm does not die. This is actually a quote from Isaiah 66.

[23] And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, And from one sabbath to another, Shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. [24]And they shall go forth, and look Upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: **For their worm shall not die, Neither shall their fire be quenched;** And they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. (Is 66:23–24 KJV)

Notice Isaiah also speaks of a place where the fire isn't quenched and the worm does not die. Jesus called it Gehenna. So, we know that this place Isaiah is speaking of is Gehenna. Notice what is burning in it. It is carcasses, dead bodies. It's not living people or the ghosts of people who have died. These are dead bodies. Keep in mind, that this is a location outside of Jerusalem. Notice the passage says that people will come up to worship the Lord and they will see these dead bodies burning. This is hardly a description of some subterranean place of torment. The people will go up to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. Gehenna is just outside of Jerusalem. This is where Jesus said the wicked would burn. Many years later the apostle John gets a vision. In his vision, he sees a place called the Lake of Fire. He writes that the wicked will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. How can this be if Jesus indicated that the wicked would be cast into Gehenna? Keep in mind that the book of Revelation is full of symbolism. Now picture that you're standing on top of the mountain looking out over Gehenna and the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. What would you see? You would see a valley full of bodies that are burning. You would essentially see, a lake of fire. The only way that Jesus' words and John's words can be reconciled is if Gehenna and the Lake of Fire are one and the same. So, as we can see from this passage, Gehenna is not a subterranean location where the dead are tormented for eternity. But, will Gehenna burn for eternity? Not according to the prophet Jeremiah.

[38]Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, That the city shall be built to the LORD From the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. [39]And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it Upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. **[40]And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes,** And all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, Unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, ***Shall be*** **holy unto the LORD**; It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever. (Jer. 31:38-40 KJV)

In this passage, we see that this area, which includes Gehenna, will one day be made holy to the Lord. It'll actually be included in the city of Jerusalem when it's rebuilt.

That leaves us with Hades. The word Hades is literally, the unseen. It is the Greek word to see prefaced with the negative article. Literally, it means not seen. In Greek philosophy, hades was known as the underworld. It was the place where the ghosts of the dead went. The Greeks had a god that ruled over the underworld and called him Hades. However, the Bible teaches no such thing. In the Scriptures hades is simply the grave.

Previously we looked at the Greek and Hebrew words translated soul and spirit. We saw how the English translations use different English words to translate these Greek and Hebrew words. Well, we actually have the same thing here, but, in reverse. Several Greek and Hebrew words are all translated using one English word. This really causes confusion. The English word is hell. The Greek and Hebrew words that have been translated this way are Hades, Gehenna, Tartarus, and Sheol.

Webster gives this as the definition of Hades.

1**:** the Greek god of the underworld 2**:** the underground abode of the dead in Greek mythology

In Greek mythology, Hades is both the land of the dead and the god who rules there. Hades the god (who the Greeks also called Pluto) is the brother of Zeus and Poseidon, who rule the skies and the seas. The realm called Hades, where he rules with his wife Persephone, is the region under the earth, full of mineral wealth and fertility and home to dead souls.

That's the secular definition of Hades. But, as we said last time, as Christians, we're not interested in how the secular world defines Hades. We want to know how the Bible uses the word, Hades. The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, translates the Hebrew word Sheol as hades. So, these two words are interchangeable. The Greek word hades means not seen. It's the Greek word to see with the negative article before it, thus it means, not seen. When people were put in the grave they were essentially, not seen. This word hades as used in the Bible seems to primarily mean, the grave. It's used in a collective sense, not necessarily of a single hole in the ground, but rather of the grave collectively. As an example, we would say,

that when people die, they go to the grave. So, let's look at some passages of Scripture to see how these words are used in the Bible.

[5]The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. (Ps. 18:5 KJV)

[3]The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of **hell** gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. (Ps. 116:3 KJV)

[5]Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on **hell**. (Prov. 5:5 KJV)

[27]Her house *is* the way to **hell**, going down to the chambers of death. (Prov. 7:27 KJV)

[14]Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from **hell**. (Prov. 23:14 KJV)

[15]Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isa. 14:15 KJV)

[15]Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with **hell** are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: (Isa. 28:15 KJV)

[18]And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with **hell** shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. (Isa. 28:18 KJV)

[2]Though they dig into **hell**, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: (Amos 9:2 KJV)

[10]I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the **gates of the grave**: I am deprived of the residue of my years. (Isa. 38:10 KJV)

[18]For the **grave** cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. (Isa. 38:18 KJV)

[14]I will ransom them from the power of the **grave**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave**, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. (Hos. 13:14 KJV)

One thing to note is that in all of these passages, the words hell and grave are translated from the Hebrew word sheol. Notice that the translators jump

back and forth between hell and the grave. Why is that? Every verse could be translated as the grave. So, why jump back and forth? The English concept of hell is that of a mythical place of fiery torment. That's not the grave. It seems that the translators are allowing bias to enter into their translation.

In Isaiah 38 we find the story of King Hezekiah and he speaks of the gates of hell. Literally it is the gates of shoel or in the Greek Old Testament, the gates of Hades.

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. [2]Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, [3]And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. [4]Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, [5]Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. [6]And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. [7]And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; [8]Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down. [9]The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: [10]I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the **grave**: I am deprived of the residue of my years. [11]I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even* the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. [12]Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me. [13]I reckoned till morning, *that*, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me. [14]Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking* upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. [15]What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. [16]O Lord, by these *things men* live, and in all these *things is* the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. [17]Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. [18] For the **grave** cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. [19]The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day: the father to the children shall

make known thy truth. [20]The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD. [21]For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover. [22]Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD? (Isa. 38:1-22 KJV)

As we see here in this passage, Hezekiah speaks of going to the gates of the grave. it's clear from the context of this passage that the gates of Sheol or Hades are the grave. It's not a place of fire or torment. God also speaks of these gates of Sheol or Hades. He calls it the gates of death.

[16] Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?
[17]Have the **gates of death** been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? [18]Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. (Job 38:16-18 KJV)

I'd like to read this passage from the Greek Old Testament as it reads a little differently.

[16]Or hast thou gone to the source of the sea, and walked in the tracks of the deep? [17] And do the **gates of death** open to thee for fear; and did the porters of **hell** quake when they saw thee? [18]And hast thou been instructed in the breadth of the *whole earth* under heaven? tell me now, what is the extent of it. (Job 38:16-18 Septuagint)

Notice, in this version we have the word hell with is the word Hades. it's equated with the gates of death. Jesus also spoke of these gates.

[18]And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and **the gates of hell** shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18 KJV)

The New King James renders this the gates of Hades.

[18]"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and **the gates of Hades** shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18 NKJ)

Many claim that this passage is referring to the domain of Satan not prevailing against the church, but that's not what the passage is referring to. It's saying the grave will not prevail against Christ's church. Paul said that

death is the enemy, however, one day death and the grave will be defeated and the believer will live forever.

[53]For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. [54]So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. [55]O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? [56]The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.
[57]But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:53-57 KJV)

Paul gets this from Hosea 13:14

[14]I will ransom them from the power of the **grave**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. (Hos. 13:14 KJV)

[14]I will deliver *them* out of the power of Hades, and will redeem them from death: where is thy penalty, O death? O Hades, where is thy sting? comfort is hidden from mine eyes. (Ho 13:14 Septuagint)

From this, we see that the gates of Hades, or the gates of hell as the KJV has it is really speaking of the grave.

We can see here the parallelisms that help define these terms for us.

Let's look at some uses in the New Testament. In the following passages the word translated hell is the Greek word hades.

[23] And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to **hell**: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
(Matt. 11:23 KJV)

[23]And in **hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Lk. 16:23 KJV)

[18]And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of **hell** shall not prevail against it.
(Matt. 16:18 KJV)

[27] Because thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Acts 2:27 KJV)

[31]He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in **hell**, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Acts 2:31 KJV)

[8] And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and **Hell** followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8 KJV)

[18] I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of **hell** and of death. (Rev. 1:18 KJV)

[13] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and **hell** delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
[14] And death and **hell** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Rev. 20:13-14 KJV)

In the following passages the word hell is the Greek word Gehenna.

[15]Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of **hell** than yourselves. (Matt. 23:15 KJV)

[33]*Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (Matt. 23:33 KJV)

[22] But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **hell** fire. (Matt. 5:22 KJV)

[29]And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into **hell**. (Matt. 5:29 KJV)

[28]And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**.

(Matt. 10:28 KJV)

[9]And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into **hell** fire. (Matt. 18:9 KJV)

[5]But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into **hell**; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.
(Lk. 12:5 KJV)

[6]And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of **hell**. (Jas. 3:6 KJV)

Tartarus-Tartaroo

[4]For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to **hell**, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; (2 Pet. 2:4 KJV)

The word hell here is translated from the Greek word Tartarus. This is the only place it appears in Scripture and it seems it was taken from secular Greek. This is the word that the Greeks used to define the English concept of hell as a subterranean place of torment. BDAG gives this definition.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. ταρταρόω

Tartarus, thought of by the Greeks as a subterranean place lower than Hades where divine punishment was meted out, and so regarded in Israelite apocalyptic as well:

The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament give this definition.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament 5020. ταρταρόω tartaróō

the subterranean abyss of Greek mythology where demigods were punished. It is mentioned in the pseudepigraphal book of Enoch as the place where

fallen angels are confined. It is found only in its verbal form in 2 Pet. 2:4 meaning to cast into or consign to Tartarus.

What's interesting here is that this word, Tartarus, would be the closest idea to the English word hell and this word only appears one time in all of Scripture and it's in reference to disobedient angels being held until the judgement.

So, having looked at all of the above passages that all read hell, did you think of three different places as you read? Or, did you think of the same place of torment was you read all of those passages about hell? I'm guessing you read one place, a place of torment. This is the problem that has been created by the translators of the King James Bible translating three completely different places as hell. They have conflated three locations as hell and it has caused much confusion. When Scripture speaks of hell being cast into the Lake of Fire, what is being cast in there? Is it the grave? Is it Gehenna? Is it Tartarus? If you don't know about this issue you have no idea that there even are three different places. Because of this doctrine there are actually people who believe that Jesus was tormented in hell. Peter, speaking of Jesus, said, 'you will not leave My soul in hell.' Based on this translation some say Jesus was tormented in hell. But what did Peter actually say? He said, 'you will not leave my soul in hades.' Hades is the grave. Jesus was not going to be left in the grave. There's nothing here about Jesus being tormented in some subterranean place of torment. This conflation of hades, Gehenna, and tartarus as hell has caused so much confusion.

So, now that we've established that three different locations are referred to as hell, and the only one that even hints at the English concept of hell is Tartarus, what actually happens to the wicked? Jesus said that the wicked would be cast into Gehenna, aka, the Lake of Fire. Do the dead remain in Gehenna, aka, the Lake of Fire, forever? Well, we've already seen from the prophet Jeremiah that Gehenna will one day be made holy to the Lord. It will be part of the restored Jerusalem. So, it obviously doesn't burn forever. Additionally, we've seen already, the dead cannot live apart from the body. We've established that three different ways. But, in case there is still any doubt, let's look at a few other passages of Scripture concerning the dead.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know that they shall die: **but the dead know not any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.
(Eccl. 9:5 KJV)

Here Solomon tells us that the dead know nothing.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
3 Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish**. (Ps. 146:2-4 KJV)

Here David says he will praise the Lord while he is alive. He says when man dies, his breath goes forth and he returns to the dust. Then he says, his thoughts perish that very day.

18For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. (Isa. 38:18-19 KJV)

Here we see that the dead cannot praise God. Only the living can praise Him.

These passages show that the dead know nothing, have no thoughts, and thus cannot praise God. But some will say, these are Old Testament passages. OK, let's ask the apostle Paul.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 **Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.** (1Cor 15:12-18 KJV)

In this passage Paul is addressing what has happened to believers who have died. He says, if there is no resurrection, then those who have died in Christ have perished. He didn't say they're ghosts were alive and in Heaven. He said apart from the Resurrection they were already gone. This is what we saw on the Old Testament. The dead, know nothing, have no thoughts, and cannot praise God. Neither can these that Paul said had perished. The only hope he holds out for these believers is the Resurrection. It should be abundantly clear from this that Hades is the grave and not a place where the ghosts of the dead are tormented. We've now established four ways, the

dead do not live on after the body dies. That is a Greek philosophical concept, not a Biblical one. It's my personal opinion that we should do away with the word hell. All it does is cause confusion. It's an English word for a mythical place that is found nowhere in Scripture. We should stick with the Biblical terms, hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus. There will be much less confusion if we do this.

Back in at the beginning I said there were two main positions regarding immortality. They were the "Immortal Soul" doctrine and "Conditional Immortality." Which does the Bible support? In the end, I think the evidence overwhelmingly supports the doctrine of Conditional Immortality, the idea that man is a flesh being and can only live as a flesh being given life from God. This is what we see in Gen 2:7 where man became a living soul. I think we've more than amply established that the doctrine of "Eternal Conscious Torment" simply isn't Biblical. It's a doctrine that came into the faith from Greek Philosophy and in particular the teachings of Plato. We've established that the words olam and aion cannot possibly mean eternal despite what we see in our English translations. We've established that man is a flesh being that is enlivened by the breath of God and cannot exist apart from the body. We've seen how the doctrine runs counter to the nature of God. God said the penalty for sin is death, not eternal torment. And, we've seen where translation bias has enabled this doctrine to continue.

Addressing the questions

In this section I'd like to address some questions and passages that people present in an attempt to prove the Eternal Conscious Torment doctrine. So, if the Bible doesn't teach eternal conscious torment in Hell, what are we to make of all of the passages that seem to suggest that the wicked will suffer eternal torment in Hell? Well, many of those passages use the Greek word aion and they translate it eternal. As we've seen that's not correct. The word is accurately translated age. Let's look at a few of them.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with
him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be
gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a
shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on
his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto

them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [35] For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: [36] Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. [37] Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? [38] When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? [39] Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? [40] And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. [41] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:** [42] For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: [43] I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. [44] Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? [45] Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. [46] **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.** (Mat 25:31-46 KJV)

In this passage Jesus is separating the sheep and the goats. He says the sheep will inherit the Kingdom and **aion**ios (age enduring) life and the goats shall go away into **aion**ios (age enduring) punishment. The typical argument here is that there is a contrast between the life and the punishment and that if the life is eternal, then so is the punishment, thus it is eternal conscious torment. However, as we've seen, aion doesn't mean eternal. It's age enduring life and age enduring punishment. The reason people use this passage to argue for eternal conscious torment is because they're reading their presuppositions into the passage. They come to this passage assuming that man can live on after the body dies. However, as we've shown, this presupposition is incorrect. Man cannot live on after the death of the body. Therefore, the only way to understand this passage is that the punishment is death and that death is age enduring.

[10] And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and **shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever**. (Rev. 20:10)

Ah, here it is. Here's the proof! Is it? Notice again the term for ever and ever. Or unto the ages of the ages. It says they'll be tormented. But, again, we have people reading their presuppositions into the text. Does this passage say that all of the wicked will suffer torment forever and ever, or unto the ages of the ages? No, it doesn't. It lists three individuals, the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. To claim anyone else will be tormented for ages of ages, is to read something into the text that simply isn't there. We've already established through four different paths that man doesn't live on after the body dies. Therefore, it's not possible for man to suffer for ages of ages.

[11] And **the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever**: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev. 14:11 KJV)

This is another passage that is often put forward as proof that the wicked are tormented forever. First notice that it's only one sentence. That's because it's been pull from its context. The context shows clearly that this is not torment in hell.

[9] And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If any man worship the beast and his image**, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, [10] The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: [11] And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. [12] Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Rev. 14:9-12 KJV)

This passage is speaking of those who worship the beast. The Greek word translated as "worship" is in the present tense. They are worshiping the beast. That's done while people are alive, not dead. We also see in verse 12 the words "here is the patience of the saints." The Greek word translated here means at this location. So, the saints are there in the same location as those worshipping the beast. I've not seen anything in Scripture that talks about the saints burning in the Lake of Fire. Since these people aren't in the Lake of Fire, what is the smoke of their torment? It's obviously symbolic of something. Consider these passages.

[21]And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying,

Thus with violence shall that great city **Babylon** be thrown down, and **shall be found no more at all.** (Rev. 18:21 KJV)

In this passage it says Babylon shall be found no more. Yet, in the next chapter it says.

19 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: [2] For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and [i]hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. [3] And again they said, Alleluia. And **her smoke rose up for ever and ever**. (Rev. 91:1-3 KJV)

Here it says her smoke rises forever and ever, or for ages of ages. How can the smoke arise for ages of ages if Babylon is found no more? If there is literally smoke rising from it for eternity, then it can be found. So, the smoke has to be symbolic. But symbolic of what? It would seem that it is symbolic of the destruction of the city. Its destruction will be for the ages of the ages. In other words, it will be destroyed and never rebuilt.

The Mount of Transfiguration

What about when Moses and Elijah are with Jesus on the mountain? Weren't they alive and with Jesus on the mountain? They spoke, surely they were alive, right?

[27]"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God." [28] Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [29]As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. [30]And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, [31]who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [32]But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. [33] Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah "-- not knowing what he said. [34] While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. [35] And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" [36]When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen. (Lk. 9:27-36 NKJ)

This passage is often used to claim that the dead are alive. It's claimed that Moses and Elijah were presently alive at this event. Is that the case? Well, we've already seen that it's not possible for man to live apart from the body. So, what are we to make of this? There are a couple of key points to note. Firstly, Jesus began by saying that there were some there with Him who would not see death till they saw the Kingdom of God. Mathew records it as "the Son of man coming in His kingdom."

[28] Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, **till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.** (Matt. 16:28 KJV)

From this we can conclude that Transfiguration event is their seeing the Kingdom of God. Obviously, that would be a future event, not present in the day of the apostles. Also, Luke records that Jesus' appearance changed and that Moses and Elijah appeared in glory. This term, "appeared in glory" is often used for the Resurrection.

[40]*There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. [41]*There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. [42]**So also *is* the resurrection of the dead**. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: [43]It is sown in dishonour**; it is raised in glory:** it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (1 Cor. 15:40-43 KJV)

Here Paul speaks of the body being resurrected in glory. So, Jesus speaks of them seeing the Kingdom of God and then they see Moses and Elijah who have been glorified. This speaks to the return of Christ to set up His Kingdom. We also see that this event would be after the apostles had died. Luke notes,

[32] But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. (Luke 9:32)

Notice they were heavy with sleep and when they had fully awakened the saw Christ's glory and that of Moses and Elijah also. They had fallen asleep and then awakened. Sleep is used as a metaphor for death all through the Scriptures and awakened is used of the Resurrection.

[12] Now if Christ be preached that he **rose** from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not **risen**: [14] And if Christ be not

risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. [15] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he **raised** up Christ: whom he **raised** not up, if so be that the dead **rise** not. [16] For if the dead **rise** not, then is not Christ **raised**: [17] And if Christ be not **raised**, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (1Cor 15:12-18 KJV)

In this passage the words, rose, rise, risen, and raised, are the Greek word "egeiro." It means to awaken from sleep. It's used for the Resurrection. Death and resurrection are like going to sleep and waking later. Peter, James, and John went to sleep and when they awakened they saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in their glorified or resurrected state. The prophet Daniel also speaks of this.

Daniel 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. [2]And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:1-2 KJV)

Daniel speaks of people sleeping in the dust. Clearly this is a metaphor for death. Then he says some shall awake to (olam- age enduring) everlasting life and some will awake to (olam-age enduring) everlasting contempt. So, we see this idea of death and resurrection as sleep and waking.

So, we can see that this is a future event from the perspective of Peter, James, and John. However, there's still more evidence. The apostle Peter spoke of this event when he wrote 2 Peter.

[16] For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. [18] And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. [19] We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (2 Pe 1:16–19 KJV)

Here Peter speaks of having made known to them the power and coming of the Lord. Notice the word power. Mark records this same event with Jesus' words this way.

And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death **till they see the kingdom of God present with power**." (Mk. 9:1 NKJ)

Mark said they would see the Kingdom of God present and with power. Peter said, they saw the power and coming of the Lord. Peter says they were eyewitnesses of His Majesty. That's a reference to the Kingdom. Then Peter refers to God's voice coming from Heaven, which they heard when they were on the mountain.

On a side note, the phrase, "This is my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased**." It isn't translated properly. The word translated "well pleased" is in the aorist tense, the past tense. It should read, in whom I was well pleased. That's referring back to the creation account.

Then Peter says they have a "more sure word of prophecy." What was that? It was the fact that they didn't just have the prophets, they had actually seen this. That begs the question, if they saw it how was it not something happening when they witnessed it? Well, Jesus gives us the answer to that question in Mathew's account of this event.

[5]While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" [6]And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.
[7]But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." [8]When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. [9]Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "**Tell the vision to no one** until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (Matt. 17:5-9 NKJ)

Mathew records that when the disciples heard the voice from Heaven they fell on their faces. Thus, they couldn't see what happened. And then Jesus touched them and they saw no one but Jesus. Then as they are leaving and going down the mountain Jesus tells them to, "tell the vision to no one." What they saw was a vision of the Second Coming of Christ. Moses and Elijah were not really alive and standing there talking to Jesus.

There is one argument that people try to make against this position and that is, they put forward this verse.

who appeared in glory and spoke of **His decease which He was <u>about</u> to accomplish** at Jerusalem. (Mark 9:31 NKJ)

It's argued from this passage that the events take place before Jesus' death, therefore, this cannot be a vision of the Second Coming. They say Jesus hadn't died yet. However, we can understand the words "which He was about to accomplish" as Luke's commentary. Jesus' death has just recently entered the narrative and Luke is letting his readers know. In other words, when Jesus was telling them about His coming and they went up to the mountain, Luke relays to his readers that Jesus did this shortly before His decease. If we separate Luke's commentary, the passage would read that Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His death at Jerusalem.

From this the evidence should be very clear that this event was a vision of the future coming of Christ and that Moses and Elijah were in their resurrected form. This was not an example of the dead living on after the body dies as many would claim.

Absent From the Body

Another passage that Christians often turn to in an attempt to prove that man lives on apart from the body is 2 Corinthians 5:8. It reads as follows.

[8] We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:8 KJV)

There it is! Absent from the body, present with the Lord. The passage is often misquoted. Often you'll hear people say, to be absent from the body **is** to be present with the Lord. However, that statement is not what the passage says and it's wrong. That statement equates the two, being absent from the body and being present with the Lord. But, Paul didn't use the word "is." If we look at the passage it's clear that Paul is stating a desire. He says he's confident and willing. He didn't say to be out of one state is to be in another.

However, again, we have people bringing their presuppositions to the text. Let's look at the passage in context.

[17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: [3] If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. [4] For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened:

not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. [5] Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. [6] Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: [7] (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) [8] We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. [9] Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. (2 Cor. 4:17-5:9 KJV)

Before we start breaking down this passage, we need to look at the background and what was happening at this time. There were some in the church at Corinth that were denying the Resurrection. Paul had addressed this in his first letter to this church.

[12] Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:
[14] And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. [15] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. [16] For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17] And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (1 Cor. 15:12-18 KJV)

It was common for Greeks to reject the idea of Resurrection because they had grown up with the teachings of Plato. For the most part, the Greeks believed that man was an immaterial being that was trapped in a flesh body. They understood the flesh to be inherently evil and so the goal of life was to escape the flesh. Once the immaterial part of man escaped the body it would ascend into the heavens ultimately reaching what was known as the Pleroma, or fullness. So, with this idea that the flesh was inherently evil they rejected the idea of Resurrection. If the flesh was evil and they had finally escaped it, why in the world would they want to go back into it?

[31] Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. [32] And **when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked**: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. (Acts 17:31-32 KJV)

Corinth and Athens were sister cities. Athens was the seat of Greek philosophy. So, these ideas started to affect the church in Corinth. This is what Paul is addressing.

He starts out comparing our lives now with what is to come in the Resurrection. Compared to the glory that awaits the believer this life now is but a light affliction. He says we're looking at those things that are not seen, not those that are seen. That's the glory that awaits the believer. They are eternal things as opposed to temporal things. Then he writes of an earthly house versus a heavenly house. Again, he's comparing the temporal with the eternal. Then he says,

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be **clothed upon** with our house which is from heaven:
(2 Cor 5:2 KJV)

He talks about groaning in this current temporal state and desiring to be clothed with the eternal state. The Greek word "enduo" which is translated as "clothed upon" carries the idea of, putting on over. It's like putting on a coat over one's regular clothes. What Paul is saying here is that he groans to put on his eternal form over his temporal form. We can see this in what he says next.

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. (2 Cor 5:3 KJV)

He says if we're clothed or clothed upon as he said previously, we shall not be found naked. What's he talking about? What does he mean by being found naked? As we saw earlier, the Greeks believed the real person was immaterial and that they would leave the body. This is the concept that Paul is addressing. He is equating the idea of them leaving the body with being found naked. To Paul the Greeks leaving the body is the same as being found naked. They would be naked without their bodies. This is also what many Christians believe. They believe that when the body dies there is some part of them that will live on after death. It's usually called the spirit or soul. However, as we've seen the spirit is God's breath and the soul cannot live apart from the body. So, this concept isn't consistent with the Bible. It's Greek philosophy. Then he says,

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (2 Cor 5:4 KJV)

He explains what he means in verse 4. In the current temporal state, we moan being burdened. He says, not that we would be unclothed or found naked. In other words, Paul doesn't want to be found naked. He doesn't want to be an immaterial being without a body. That's the very thing

Christians who you this passage to prove man lives on after death are arguing for. Paul doesn't want to be found naked. He doesn't want to be an immaterial being without a body. Rather, he wants to be "clothed upon." He wants to be clothed upon with that eternal state. We see that because he indicates that when he says, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life." What Paul is saying here is that he doesn't want to be an immaterial being without a body, like the Greeks sought. Rather, he wants the eternal state to be put on over top of his mortal state. Paul is outright rejecting the idea of leaving the body. After talking about receiving the downpayment of the spirit he says,

[6] Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: [7] (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) [8] We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:6-8 KJV)

Here is the passage in question. He says while at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. Then verse 8, says he's willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This is the passage that people use to claim that man can live on after death. They say when a person dies, they are present with the Lord. Is that what Paul is saying? We just read where he said he didn't want to be absent from his body. He said he didn't want to be found naked. Surely, he's not contradicting himself. No, he's not. The translation here isn't the best. Let's look at a few of these words. Paul said he didn't want to be found naked. So, he rejected the idea of being alive without a body. So what does he mean to be absent from the body? He's not talking about his fleshly body. Paul often speaks in metaphors. He often calls the church the body of Christ.

[26] And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. [27] Now **ye are the body of Christ**, and members in particular. (1 Cor. 12:26-27 KJV)

[30] For **we are members of his body**, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Eph. 5:30 KJV)

[4] For as we have many **members in one body**, and all members have not the same office:
[5] So **we, *being* many, are one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another. (Rom. 12:4-5 KJV)

Let's entertain the idea that Paul is talking about being absent from the body of Christ. Can we substantiate this? The Greek word translated absent is

ἐκδημέω. Here is the definition in Kittles, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, the TDNT. It is one of the foremost lexicons available.

ἐκδημέω has the same meaning as the more common ἀποδημέω, and like it derives from ἔκδημος (ἀπόδημος) == ἐκ (ἀπὸ) τοῦ δήμου ὥκ. It thus has the sense of "to be abroad," the root δῆμ- being used in sense b., though there is a hint of c., since the man who is abroad is also away from his own people. [1]

Notice that this word carries the idea of being abroad or away from one's people. Let's look at the word translated as present. It's the same root word δημος prefixed with ἐν. It essentially means to be away from one's people or to be with one's people. The same idea can be expressed as to go abroad and return home. We have this idea of being away from one's people and with one's people and Paul is speaking of the body of Christ. So, to be absent from the body is to be away from the church. So, Paul desires to be absent from the body or away from the church and present with Christ. Has he expressed that desire before?

[23] For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: [24] Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you. [25] And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; [26] That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. (Phil. 1:23-26 KJV)

He states it outright here. He says he has a desire to depart and be with Christ. What did he say is 2 Cor 5? He said he was willing to be absent from the body (of Christ) and present with the Lord. That's all he's saying. He's not teaching the Greek concept of an immaterial being leaving the body and going to be with the Lord when its body dies.

The Thief on the Cross

What about the thief on the cross? Doesn't this prove that the dead are alive after the body dies? Well, let's look at the passage.

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1 Walter Grundmann, "Δῆμος, Ἐκδημέω, Ἐνδημέω, Παρεπίδημος," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 63.

[39] And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. [40] But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? [41] And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. [42] And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. [43] And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Lk 23:39-43 KJV)

This passage is often cited as proof that the dead live on after the body dies. It's argued from this passage that Jesus and the thief went to Paradise that same day. In this claim, it's assumed that Paradise is a place where the dead go and it's often conflated with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It's argued that Paradise is a place in Hades that is equated with Abraham's bosom. Is this what Jesus was saying to the thief? There are several things to consider here. The first thing to consider is, what did the thief ask of Jesus? Did the thief ask Jesus about where they'd be later that day? No. The thief asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom. So, the time period that the thief is referring to is the time of Jesus' Kingdom. So, the logical expected response from Jesus would be to answer the request of the thief. We wouldn't expect Jesus to completely ignore the request and start speaking of some event later that afternoon. So, to answer the thief's request, Jesus speaks of Paradise. This would logically lead us to understand that Paradise has something to do with Christ's Kingdom rather than some location in Hades. However, before we address Paradise, let's consider another factor. In the original Greek texts, there was no punctuation and they were written in all capital letters. So, any punctuation we find in our English translations is added by the translators and is put where they believe it should be. Where they think it should go is based on what they already believe. This is where bias can enter into the translation. Here is the particular verse in question.

"[43] And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

The key to understanding this is the comma that is placed before the word today. The translators have placed the comma before the word, today. Why would they do that? It's because they believe that the dead live on after the body dies. However, we could also place the comma after the word today.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee To day, shalt thou be with me in paradise.

By moving the comma from before the word, today, to after it, we completely change the time period in the sentence. Either placement of the comma is grammatically correct in the Greek text. It's simply a matter or where one

believes it should be. If we place the comma after the word today the sentence reads that Jesus is saying to the thief that day, that he will be with Jesus in Paradise. When they will be in Paradise is not stated. Due to the fact that either of these translations is correct, the sentence can't be used to prove either one is correct to the exclusion of the other. That alone eliminates this passage from being used to prove that the dead live on after the body dies. We can look at probabilities, which support the second translation, however, probabilities aren't proof either.

Getting back to Paradise, the thief was requesting to be remembered in Jesus' Kingdom. To which Jesus replied that the thief would be with Him in Paradise. This indicates that Paradise is in some way tied to Christ's Kingdom. The Greek word that we get the word Paradise from is paradeisos. It means a garden. So the thief asks to be remembered in the Kingdom and Jesus' says to the thief, 'You will be with me in the garden.' What does a garden have to do with Christ's Kingdom? Well, in Genesis we find these words.

[8] And the LORD God planted a **garden** eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. [9] And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Ge 2:8-9 KJV)

It says God planted a garden called Eden. The Greek word is paradeisos. In English, it's garden or paradise. That begs the question, why did the translators translate the same word paradeisos, as garden in Genesis but Paradise in Luke? We need to ask, do they believe that Jesus and the thief went to a garden that day? No. They believe that they left their bodies and their ghosts went on to a place called Paradise. To say Jesus and the thief went to a garden that day doesn't fit what they believe. This translation is based on a misunderstanding of the passage. Remember, the request was regarding the Kingdom, not where he'd be later that afternoon.

So, Jesus told the thief that he would be with Him in Paradise. The thief, as a Jew, would understand this to be a reference to the restored creation. Peter said that God had been speaking of the restoration of the creation through all of the prophets since the world began.

[19] Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, [20] and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, [21] whom heaven must receive until the times of **restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began**. (Acts 3:19-21 NKJ)

God has spoken of this from the very beginning. The thief would likely have known this. So, his expectation from Jesus' words should be that of a restored Eden. How do we know that this is correct? Jesus later gave the words to the apostle John. In His letters to the Churches in Revelation Jesus said to the church at Ephesus,

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7 KJV)

Here we find that Jesus has promised to the believers that He will give to them to eat of the Tree of Life, which He says is in the paradise, or garden, of God. What is the garden of God? It is the Garden of Eden that God planted in Genesis. So, by telling the thief that he would be in the garden with Jesus, Jesus was telling him that he'd be in the restored creation that God spoke of through all of His prophets since the world began.

The God of the Living

Another passage that is often used to claim that the dead are alive apart from their body is

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave *his* wife *behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err. (Mark 12:18-27 KJV)

It is often argued from this passage that the phrase, "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living," proves that those who have died are actually alive as disembodied beings, ie. ghosts. But, is that what the

passage is actually saying? As we look at the passage we see that Jesus said, "and as toughing the dead, that they rise." So, Jesus puts the time frame of His statement at the resurrection. So, the phrase, 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the Living,' refers to the Resurrection, not to the current state of those individuals.

Another consideration is that the phrase "the living" is being used of a class of people. It's not saying those people were currently alive, but rather that there is a class of people called the living. We see Jesus using similar language of the dead.

[57] Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." [58] And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head." [59] Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." [60] Jesus said to him, "Let **the dead** bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." (Lk. 9:57-60 NKJ)

In this passage we see Jesus naming a class of people, "the dead." It's obvious that these people aren't literally dead. He says to let them, this class of people called the dead, bury their dead. He's not talking about people who are literally dead burying other people who are literally dead. He's using "the dead" to name a class of people. This is the same thing He did when He spoke of "the living." It's a class of people.

One more point that we find from Paul. Paul says that God calls those things that aren't as though they were.

[17](As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. [18]Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. (Rom. 4:17-18 KJV)

Here God says, "I have made thee a father of many nations." Paul is quoting this from Genesis 17.

[5] Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. (Gen. 17:5 KJV)

God said He had made, past tense, Abraham a father of many nations. The promise was through Isaac, yet Isaac hadn't even been born at the time that God made the promise to Abraham. So, God counted it as already done,

even though it hadn't happened yet. So, it's not strange for us to see Jesus calling Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "the living" even though they weren't alive at that time.

One last point on this comes from Luke's record of this event.

[34]And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: [35]But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: [36]Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. [37]**Now that the dead are raised**, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. [38]For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: **for all live unto him**. [39]Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. (Lk. 20:34-39 KJV)

Here Luke ties the phrase, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," directly to the resurrection. In other words, the phrase, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," refers to the Resurrection and not their current state of being. Then Luke qualifies it with this statement, "for all live unto Him." In other words, it's from God's perspective. From God's perspective they are not dead because He holds their lives in His hand. This doesn't mean they aren't literally dead. They are. That can be seen from Scripture. But this fits with what we saw from Paul when he said that God calls those things that aren't as though they were.

[17] (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and **calleth those things which be not as though they were**. (Ro 4:17KJV)

When we break it down we can see that Jesus isn't speaking of the current state of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but rather that they will live in the Resurrection.

Samuel's Ghost

Another, and one of the more popular passages that is used to claim that man lives on after death is that of Saul calling up Samual.

[11]Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. [12]And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me?

for thou *art* Saul. [13]And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. [14]And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself. (1 Sam. 28:11-14 KJV)

In this passage Saul has sought a medium to supposedly bring up Samuel's ghost from the underworld. Several issues arise for those who claim that this is Samuel's ghost and that Samuel is actually alive. One thing to consider here is the words used. It's argued by those who claim this is life after death that this is Samuel's spirit or soul. They can't seem to agree whether this is the spirit or the soul. That's one problem they have with this position is that they conflate these two words. In one place it's the spirit that lives on after death and in another it's the soul. Whichever is more convenient seems to be used. However, soul and spirit are two completely different things. But, what's interesting about this passage is that neither of the words soul or spirit appear in this passage. When Saul asks the woman what she saw, she says she saw Elohim or gods.

[13] And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, **I saw gods** ascending out of the earth.
(1 Sam. 28:13 KJV)

She didn't see a soul or a spirit, she saw gods. She didn't see "The God," so what did she see? Well, the Scriptures tell us that the gods of the nations are demons.

[15]"But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! Then he forsook God *who* made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. provoked Him to jealousy with foreign *gods*; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. [17]They sacrificed to demons, not to God, *To gods* they did not know, To new *gods*, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. (Deut. 32:15-17 NKJ)

Here God says through Moses that the Jews would provoke God to anger with foreign gods. He says they sacrificed to demons, to gods they didn't know. When the pagans sacrificed they weren't just giving sacrifices to stones, they were sacrificing to demons. Paul tells us this also.

[20] Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. (1 Cor. 10:20 NKJ)

It's pretty clear from the Scriptures that these gods are demons. So, this woman didn't see Samuel. She saw a demon. That's likely why she screamed.

The next thing we notice is that Saul didn't see Samuel. The woman described to Saul what she saw. Then the Scriptures say that Saul "perceived" that it was Samuel. That begs the question, what did Saul want to see?

[11] Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, **Bring me up Samuel**. (1 Sam. 28:11 KJV)

Saul was expecting to see Samuel. So, it's no real surprise that he perceived what the woman saw was Samuel.

[14]And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And **Saul perceived** that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself. (1 Sam. 28:14 KJV)

Then in the narrative it says that Samuel spoke to Saul. Since Saul perceived the he was speaking to Samuel we would expect the narrative to say as much. Then Saul speaks to the one he perceives to be Samuel

And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and **God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets**, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. (1 Sam. 28:15 KJV)

We see here that Saul says that God has departed from him and that He won't answer him anymore. He says God won't answer by prophets. Well, what is Samuel? He's a prophet. If God wouldn't answer Saul through prophets, He wouldn't have answered through Samuel even if Samuel was alive. It's curious why Saul would even attempt to seek Samuel if God wouldn't answer him by prophets. Then we find these words.

[16]Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? [17]And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David: [18]Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. [19]Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to

morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. (1 Sam. 28:16-19 KJV)

It's often argued here that Samuel was actually alive because he prophesied the death of Saul. In the passage the one Saul perceives as Samuel says, "into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me:" People see this as a prophecy and claim this is proof that it was Samuel and that he was alive. However, we've already seen that God would not answer Saul by His prophets, so why would Samuel be answering him? Additionally, Saul did not die the next day. If we follow the events that took place between the statement and Saul's death there was too much time for Saul to have died the next day. Firstly, Saul had to return to his army that night. The next day there were two armies that were moving to get into position for war. With the distances they covered, it was not possible to do all of that in a day. Scholars believe it would have taken several days to accomplish these events. Thus, Saul did not die the next day.

On a final note on this passage, we know that what the woman saw was a demon from 1 Chronicles 10:13.

13 So **Saul died for his transgression** which he committed against the LORD, *even* against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and **also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to inquire *of it*;** 14 And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Verse 13 says that Saul died because he sought counsel from one who had a demon. It says he sought to inquire from the demon.

So, this passage doesn't support the idea that the dead are somehow alive apart from the body. Nowhere in the passage do we find either the word spirit or soul. And it's the spirit or soul that supposedly lives on after the body dies. Additionally, 1 Chronicles 10:13 states plainly that Saul sought to inquire of a demon. As we've seen in other passages the gods of the pagans were demons and the woman saw gods.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Ah, this is it. This is the proof. Surely this proves man is alive after the body dies. Does it? Many people claim this is a literal event. However, as we've seen four different ways, man cannot live apart from the body. So, what then is this passage saying?

Many Christians believe that Jesus is describing the afterlife. However, this is not the case. In the parable He is addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, not His disciples. The purpose of the parables was so that they would see and not perceive and hear and not understand.

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

(Mat 13:34-35 KJV)

10 the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their*ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

(Mat 13:10-16 KJV)

What's often overlooked in the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man are the verses that come just before it.

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. 16 "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. 17 "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. 18 "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery. (Lk. 16:14-18 NKJ)

The Pharisees, hearing Jesus' previous parables derided Him. So, He turns His attention to them. First He chastises them for seeking justification before

men. Then He says, the Law and the Prophets were until John. He said that to the Scribes and Pharisees. What He is essentially saying there is, that you guys are done. Your reign is over. A change is coming. Essentially, the priesthood is over. Then He points back to Malachi when He accuses them of divorcing their wives. You need to read the whole book of Malachi

(4 chapters). Remember this is the last book of the Old Testament and it is the last communication Israel had with God until Christ came. Here is chapter 2, remember, Jesus gave the parable to the Scribes and Pharisees.

And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. 4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law. 10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. 12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. 13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. 14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his

garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. 17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment? (Mal. 2:1-17 KJV)

Here Malachi speaks of the corrupt priesthood. In the prophecy look at what God said of the priesthood, "and one shall take you away with it". Here God is speaking of taking away the Priesthood. That's exactly what happened in AD 70. Notice in verse 8 God says they have departed from the way, caused many to stumble and have corrupted the covenant with Levi. Consider what Jesus said to them in His day,

Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 "For God commanded, saying,`Honor your father and your mother'; and,`He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 "But you say,`Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"-- 6 `then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 `These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Matt. 15:1-9 NKJ)

and,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (Matt. 23:15 KJV)

and,

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; (Matt. 26:59 KJV)

Notice in Verse 6 God said, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips". This speaks of the covenant with Levi. Levi is the head of the Levites, the tribe of the priesthood. Yet, look at them here in Jesus' day. They are looking for people to bear false witness. They have corrupted the covenant with Levi.

All of this is leading up to the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. By saying whoever divorces his wife commits adultery, Jesus is pointing back to Malachi and this prophecy of the taking away of the priesthood. The Scribes and the Pharisees should have been very familiar with Malachi and should have seen the connection Jesus was making. From this background, Jesus

goes into the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. In this parable, we see the taking away of the priesthood just like God said in Malachi 2:3

I would submit that the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man is not about the afterlife at all, but rather it is a judgment against those to whom Jesus was speaking, the leadership of Israel. There are quite a few reasons to question the idea that this parable is about an afterlife. Why would one think this is a parable about an afterlife? If that’s the case, does it mean that the rich go to hell and the poor get saved? Jesus didn't say the rich man was wicked, He just said he was rich. Jesus didn't say that Lazarus was righteous, just that he was poor. What is here that would indicate that this is what happens to the righteous and the wicked upon death?

The details of the parable give us an indication of what it means. We're told that the Rich Man was clothed in purple and fine linen. What does that mean? We see that the Rich Man is a Jew. Why? We're told that the Rich Man had 5 brothers, why? Why is the beggar named Lazarus? What is "Abraham's bosom:"? All of these details are indications of what the parable is about. This parable is drawn from several Old Testament passages. For instance, the Rich Man is said to be suffering torment in flames in Hades. However, Jesus indicated that Gehenna is where the wicked will go. In the Scriptures Hades is usually translated as the grave, not a place of torment. The grave is where the body goes. The Rich Man was in Hades, this indicates his body. We know that dead people can't speak so we should consider that this is a parable.

So, what do the details mean? In Jesus' day, Israel didn't have a king, however, the priesthood unofficially served that role. Purple was the color of royalty and the priests wore fine linen, this indicates that the Rich Man represents the priesthood. We're also told that the Rich Man had five brothers. Levi had five brothers. Levi is the head of the Levites which was the tribe of the Priesthood. Why is the beggar named Lazarus? Lazarus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Eleazar, which means, God Help. Who did God Help? Was it not Jesus? Wasn't the Father with Him and in Him? We're told that Lazarus was covered in sores. Jesus was covered in sores from the lashings. We're told that the dogs licked Lazarus' sores. In the Scriptures, Gentiles are referred to as dogs by the Jews. So, we have the Rich Man, the Jews, rejecting Lazarus while the dogs, the Gentiles, are accepting Him. Why is Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? Contrary to popular belief, Abraham's bosom is not a location somewhere in the Earth. Abraham's bosom is mentioned in another place in Scripture,

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. (Gen. 16:5 KJV)

We see that being in Abraham's bosom means to be in an intimate relationship with Abraham. So, if Lazarus represents Jesus, what does it mean that He is in Abraham's bosom? It means that Abraham is embracing His long promised seed. The Jewish leadership thought that they were the seed of Abraham and heirs to the promises. While they were the physical seed of Abraham, they weren't the promised seed of Abraham. Jesus was the promised seed of Abraham. Paul tells us,

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

(Gal. 3:16 KJV)

So, in this parable we see the long awaited Seed of Abraham being embraced by Abraham, and the Jews, the physical seed, being cast off. They're suffering in the flame. Since this is Hades and not Gehenna, what is the flame. We can see what it is from several Old Testament prophecies. In the Song of Moses, Moses wrote of what would happen to Israel in the latter days.

18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. 19 And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. 21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23 I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. 24 They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.1 25 The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. (Deut. 32:18-25 KJV)

Paul quotes from this passage and applies it to his time so we know that's the time period. Notice verse 22. God says a fire is kindled in His anger and it will burn to the lowest Hades. This passage is about judgment in Christ's day. We know that that judgment came in A.D. 70. What we see here is that God's anger is the fire that burns in Hades. The Rich Man, the priesthood, is suffering God's anger in this parable. We have another prophecy of this same event. I'll post a few passages for the sake of space. It's best to read all of Isaiah 28 and 29 to get the full gist of this judgment.

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! 2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

(Isa. 28:1-3 KJV)

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

(Isa. 28:14-15 KJV)

God says Israel will be trodden underfoot. In verse 14 we see that God is addressing the leadership of Israel. However, notice what Israel has said, they had made a covenant with death and are in agreement with Hades. This is their agreement with Rome. He goes on,

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. 2 Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3 And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. (Isa. 29:1-4 KJV)

Notice here that God is going to lay siege against Ariel, Jerusalem. This is where the temple and the priesthood are. Remember, God said they were in a covenant with Hades. Hades is the grave. In verse 4 Gods says of the priesthood you shall be brought down, you shall speak out of the dust. The Rich Man who represents the priesthood was in Hades, the dust, speaking out of the ground. Notice also that God says their voice shall be one who has a familiar spirit. We can see this in the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.

The book of Malachi is about judgment of Israel. it's aimed primarily at the priesthood.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith the

LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 1:6-8 KJV)

In this passage we see the priests justifying themselves.

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be meat in mine house, And prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, And pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Mal 3:8-10 KJV)

Here we have Lovers of money.

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, Against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: For one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: Therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. 17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, And he delighteth in them; Or, Where is the God of judgment? (Mal 2:14-17 KJV)

After asking, "Where is the God of judgment," the Lord says,

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2 But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. (Mal 3:1-3 KJV)

This passage speaks of the judgment of God. Notice it is speaking of the coming of Christ. He is "the messenger of the covenant". He is the one who would bring the judgment of God to these priests. That judgment came in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed. Jesus gave them this judgement in a parable.

20 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, 2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. 8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. 9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. 14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. (Luke 20:1-19 KJV)

We see in this passage that the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came and confronted Jesus after addressing them He speaks a parable to the people in the presence of the chief priests, scribes, and elders. In the parable the owner of the vineyard sends his servants to the men of the vineyard to receive what is his and the men of the vineyard killed them. God

had sent His prophets to Israel and they killed them. Then the owner decides to send his son. The men of the vineyard then killed his son. God sent His Son to Israel and they killed His Son. The chief priests, scribes, and elders perceived that Jesus was speaking of them. They were correct. They should have, and probably did, realize that Jesus was referencing an Old Testament passage. God spoke of a vineyard through the prophet Isaiah.

Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, And planted it with the choicest vine, And built a tower in the midst of it, And also made a winepress therein: And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, And it brought forth wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, That I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, Brought it forth wild grapes? 5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; And break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 And I will lay it waste: It shall not be pruned, nor digged; But there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah his pleasant plant: And he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; For righteousness, but behold a cry. (Is. 5:1-7 KJV)

Here God asks the men of Jerusalem and Judah to judge between Him and His vineyard. He asks, what more could be done that He hasn't already done? He's at the end of His rope. So notice what He says He will do. He will take away its hedge, and it will be eaten up, the wall will be broken down and it will be laid waste. Then He says that His vineyard is the house of Israel and the men of Judah. This is what happened in AD 70 when the Romans came in and destroyed the city and scattered the Jews. This is the parable that Jesus is telling and the chief priests, scribes, and elders, rightly perceived that He was speaking of them. Jesus brings all of this to mind when He said to the scribes and Pharisees, the Law and the prophets were until John, you are they who justify yourselves before men, and when He chastises them for divorcing their wives.

After this, Jesus launches into the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In the parable, He gives us several important details as to what the parable means. The Rich Man was dressed in purple and fine linen, and he fared sumptuously. The Rich Man died after Lazarus. The Rich Man had five brothers. The Rich Man called Abraham, father. The Rich Man is tormented in the flame. The Rich man is in hades, the grave. On the other hand,

Lazarus was poor, a beggar at the Rich Man's gate. Lazarus was full of sores and sought crumbs from the Rich Man's table. Lazarus died before the Rich Man. Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. Lazarus is being comforted while the Rich Man is being tormented. It's just the opposite of what they had when they were alive. All of these details are important to understanding the parable and what it is that Jesus is saying.

Let's start breaking down the parable and see what all of these details mean. Firstly, we see that the Rich Man called Abraham, father. This indicates that the Rich Man is a Jew. He's one of Abraham's seed, a physical seed. He was dressed in purple and fine linen. Purple was the color of kings. We can see this in Luke.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his *head*, 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. (Luke 15:17 KJV)

The priests wore fine linen.

27 And they made coats *of* fine linen *of* woven work for Aaron, and for his sons, 28 And a mitre *of* fine linen, and goodly bonnets *of* fine linen, and linen breeches *of* fine twined linen, 29 And a girdle *of* fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, *of* needlework; as the Lord commanded Moses. (Ex. 39:27-29 KJV)

As we see in these two passages, the Rich Man, being dressed in purple and fine linen is indicative of a kingly priest. During the time of the Hasmonean Dynasty, the Jews were ruled by a priest who functioned in the role of priest/king. Thus, Jesus dressing the Rich Man in purple and fine linen tells His audience, and us, that the Rich Man is of the tribe of Levi. Levi was the tribe of the priests. God had made a covenant with Levi.

And now, O ye priests, this commandment *is* for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay *it* to heart, To give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay *it* to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, And spread dung upon your faces, *even* the dung of your solemn feasts; And *one* shall take you away with it. 4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, That my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; And I gave them to him *for* the fear wherewith he feared me, And was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And iniquity was not found in his lips: He walked with me in peace and equity,

And did turn many away from iniquity. 7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, And they should seek the law at his mouth: For he *is* the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8 But ye are departed out of the way; Ye have caused many to stumble at the law; Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, According as ye have not kept my ways, But have been partial in the law. (Mal.2:1-9 KJV)

Notice this passage is addressed to the priests. God had made a covenant with Levi. Levi walked with God and revered Him. He was honest and faithful. However, by Malachi's day that was no longer the case. We see in the book of Malachi that God is lambasting the priesthood. He said that the priest should speak truth and yet they were not speaking truth. God said that they had departed out of the way and were causing many to stumble at the Law. Remember what Jesus said to them?

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (Mat. 22:13-15 KJV)

Jesus accuses them of the very same thing that they were accused of in Malachi 2. Remember, in Chapter three We see God's "messenger of the covenant" coming to bring judgment on these priests. The priests in Malachi's day had "departed out of the way". The priests in Jesus' day were no better, they may have been worse. The priests in Jesus' day were actually seeking false witness against Him so they could crucify Him. So, these priests had really, "departed out of the way".

We've established that the Rich Man calling Abraham father indicates that he is a Jew and being dressed in purple and fine linen represents the priesthood. However, there's more. We also see that the Rich Man had five brothers. Levi, the head of the Levites, the one who had the covenant with God, also had five brothers. Levi's five brothers were, Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Judah. Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah. When the promised land was divided up among the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi, the Levites, were not given a land allotment. Instead, they were to serve in the temple.

What about Lazarus? Why did Jesus choose the name Lazarus? Did He just pull it out of thin air? The name Lazarus comes from the Hebrew name Eleazar, which means God help or God is my help.

16For dogs have compassed me: The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: They pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: They look and stare upon me. 18 They part my garments among them, And cast lots upon my vesture. 19 But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. (Psalm 22:16-19 KJV)

In this prophecy of Jesus, we see the dogs encompassed Him. Remember in the parable the dogs licked Lazarus' sores? Then He says, "haste thee to help me." Lazarus means God help.

And I was not rebellious, Neither turned away back. 6 I gave my back to the smiters, And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7For the Lord God will help me; Therefore shall I not be confounded: Therefore have I set my face like a flint, And I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8 He is near that justifieth me; Who will contend with me? let us stand together: Who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord God will help me; Who is he that shall condemn me? (Is. 50:5-9 KJV)

In this Messianic prophecy we see verse 6 says He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who plucked out the beard. But then notice verse 7. "For the Lord God will help me" That's the meaning of the name Lazarus. David is prophesying the words of Christ and He says, "for the Lord God will help me." Lazarus.

The Scribes and Pharisees should have seen this connection as soon as Jesus gave the Parable.

The parable also says Lazarus was poor. Jesus was poor. There were people who funded his ministry.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

(Luke 9:58 KJV)

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Cor. 8:9 KJV)

Lazarus was laid at the Rich Man's gate. He was laid before the Rich Man. Jesus was laid before Israel. Lazarus was full of sores. Jesus was full of sores.

15 And *so* Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified. (Mark 15:15 KJV)

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed

all that were sick: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses. (Mat. 8:16-17 KJV)

This one bears our sins and suffers pain for us, and we accounted him to be in trouble and calamity and ill-treatment. 5 But he was wounded because of our acts of lawlessness and has been weakened because of our sins; upon him was the discipline of our peace; by his bruise we were healed.

(Isaiah 53:4-5 Septuagint)

In the parable, we see that the dogs licked Lazarus' sores.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Mat 15:22-28 KJV)

The Jews referred to the Gentiles as dogs. We see that in this passage. However, notice what the woman says, 'the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the masters table.' In the parable, it says that Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the Rich Man's table. We know that Jesus came to the Jews. In the passage above He said He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. Yet, the Jews rejected Him. The apostle John tells us that,

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not (John 1:6-11 KJV)

Here John tells us that Jesus came to His own and His own did not receive Him. The apostle Paul also said this to the Jews.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was

necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. (Acts 13:45-49 KJV)

Paul said that the word of God had to go to the Jews first, however, they rejected it, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life. The Gentiles on the other hand rejoiced in the word of the Lord, the Gospel message. They embraced Christ. This is the dogs licking His sores.

The passage says that Lazarus died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The first thing to note here is that Lazarus died before the Rich Man. Jesus died before the priesthood was ended. It says that Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's, his father's, bosom. The key point here is that he was carried. Jesus, too, was carried, by angels, to His Father's bosom.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

(Acts 1:9-11 KJV)

In this passage it says Jesus was taken up. The word translated "taken" is the Greek word eperthe, and it's in the passive voice. The passive voice indicates that the subject is receiving the action of the verb. In other words, He was taken up by something or someone. He didn't go up under His own power. This passage doesn't say that Jesus was taken up by angels. However, it does say He will return in like manner. So, His return will be the same as His being taken up. We do know how He will return.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mat 24:29-31)

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (Mat. 25:31 KJV)

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

(Jude 1:14-15 KJV)

In this passage, it says, "with ten thousands of his saints". The word translated saints is hagios. It literally means holy. It's an adjective but there is no noun to modify. Therefore, it should be translated holy ones. Holy ones is a better translation, because when people hear the word saints, they think of Christians. However, holy ones could refer to Christians, but it could also refer to angels. As we've seen from the two previous passages, Jesus is returning with His angels, not Christians.

Since the angels at the tomb said that Jesus would return just as He left, we can conclude that He left with angels. Since He was taken up, we can conclude that He was carried up by angels to His Father's bosom. John tells us that the Son is in the Father's bosom.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)

So, in the parable we have Lazarus being carried by angels to his father Abraham's bosom and we have Jesus being carried by angels to His Father's bosom.

If Lazarus represents Jesus in the parable, what does it mean that He is carried to Abraham's bosom? Abraham's bosom is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. (Gen. 16:2-5 KJV)

From this passage we can see that being in Abraham's bosom means to be in a relationship with Abraham. It's a close embrace. What does this mean? If Lazarus represents Jesus, then what we are seeing in this parable is Abraham embracing his long-awaited seed. God had promised Abraham a seed back in Genesis.

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Gen. 22:16-18 KJV)

God had made a four-fold promise to Abraham. He told him He would make him a great nation, that many nations would come from him, that all nations would be blessed through him, and that He would give him all the land of Canaan. The promise was to Abraham and his seed. The Jews believed they were the seed because they were the offspring of Abraham. However, Paul corrects their misunderstanding when he says the promised seed is not the Jews, but rather is Christ.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (Gal. 3:16 KJV)

The Jews thought they were the recipients of the promise, but Paul says no, it was Christ. So, in the parable we see Abraham embracing the promised seed several thousand years later. On the other hand, we see the Rich Man, the physical seed of Abraham, who thought he was the recipient, suffering. Remember what Jesus said to the Jews?

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 8:11-12 KJV)

He said the children of the kingdom would be cast out. This is what we see in the parable. We see Lazarus being accepted and comforted while the Rich Man, who represents the, "children of the kingdom", is cast out and suffering.

Then the Rich Man asks Abraham to send Lazarus with water to cool his tongue. Abraham reminds him that previously he had good things and Lazarus did not. Now things are reversed. But what is this flame that is torturing the Rich Man? We see that the Rich Man is in Hades. Hades is the grave. So, he's suffering in flames in Hades. This is translated hell in some Bible, but that is a poor translation and causes a lot of confusion. The term is literally Hades. There are three words translated as hell in the King James Bible. They are hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus. Tartarus is used of angels so we can set that one aside. That leaves Hades and Gehenna. Hades is often translated as the grave. Gehenna is the place where Jesus said the wicked would burn. In the passage we looked at earlier where Jesus said the

Pharisees searched for proselytes and made them two-fold more a child of hell, He used the word Gehenna. In Mark He says,

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mk. 9:43-44 KJV)

Hell, in this passage is the word Gehenna. This is where the wicked and sinners will burn. So why does the parable have the Rich Man suffering in fire in Hades? There are only two places in Scripture that speak of fire in Hades. The Scribes and the Pharisees would be well acquainted with what Jesus was referring to. One mention is here in Jesus' parable. The other is in the Song of Moses. This is a song that God gave to Moses to teach to the children of Israel. It's a song about Israel's turning away from God in the latter times.

15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger. 17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. 18 Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. 19 And when the LORD saw *it*, he abhorred *them*, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith. 21 They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is* not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are* not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23 I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. 24 *They shall be* burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. 25 The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling *also* with the man of gray hairs. 26 I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: (Deut. 32:15-26 KJV)

The apostle Paul quotes verse 21 and applies it to his day. So, we know the time frame of this judgment is in the days of Jesus and the apostles.

Jeshurun is another name for Israel. In this song, they've turned from God and are worshipping idols. Notice in verse 22 it says, "for a fire is kindled in

mine anger and shall burn to the lowest hell". The word translated as hell is the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades. The scribes and Pharisees would be familiar with this passage and should have easily made the connection that Jesus was making. The Rich Man, suffering in flames in Hades is suffering the wrath of God we see in this passage. It is the fire kindled in God's anger that shall burn to the lowest hades. This is what Jesus is referring to when He speaks of the Rich Man being in torment in Hades.

He says they are unmindful and have forgotten the God that made them. But notice what He says in verse 20, "I will hide my face from them". That is exactly what happened in AD 70. When God's presence left the temple, the Jews saw Him no more.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Mat 27:50-51 KJV)

Notice here that when Jesus died the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. What is the significance of this? The veil is what separated the Holy of Holies. This was the most holy place in the temple and where God's presence was. In the Tabernacle that God had Moses make, in the holiest place, the holy of holies, was the Ark of the Covenant and the tablets of stone. No one could enter into it except the high priest, once a year, on the day of atonement. In the temple of Jesus' day, there was also the holy of holies. And, as with the Tabernacle, no one could enter it except the high priest, once a year, on the day of atonement. It was so holy that legend has it that the Jews would tie a rope around the leg of the high priest so that if he did something wrong and was struck dead in there they could pull his body out with the rope. That's how holy it was. It was where God met with His people. Now, consider that the veil is torn in half from top to bottom. That meant that people could look into the holy of holies. This is indicative of God leaving His temple. He left His temple previously as recorded by Ezekiel in chapters 9 and 10. God was about to bring judgment on Jerusalem and Ezekiel describes seeing God leave the temple. When the Jews killed God's son, they cemented the judgment that would come in AD 70. God left His temple and it would shortly be destroyed. God, as He said in Deuteronomy 32, hid His face from Israel and they have not seen it even to this day.

Then in the parable we find these words.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. (Luke 16:26 KJV)

We see there's a great gulf between Abraham and the Rich Man that cannot be crossed. No one can give the Rich Man relief from his suffering. What is this great gulf. The priesthood is suffering, God has exiled the priesthood, and it is suffering His wrath. I would submit that this gulf is the period of time that the priesthood suffers God's anger. This time period can be determined from Leviticus 26. This time period is also spoken of by Jesus. He calls it, "the times of the Gentiles."

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24 KJV)

In this passage Jesus is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and how it will be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. It was trodden down in AD 70 and it's still in that state today. I'd submit that this is the great gulf that cannot be crossed which is why the priesthood, the Rich Man, cannot get relief. This time period will be fulfilled just as God has determined.

Then the Rich Man pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers, so they don't end up in the same place of torment. Abraham says no, 'they have Moses and the Prophets.' They had the information they needed to avoid the judgment, but they would not listen. The Rich Man then says if one rose from the dead and went to them they would repent. Abraham says if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they won't listen even if one rises from the dead. We actually see that in Scripture. When Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, did the Scribes and Pharisees believe? No, in fact, they wanted to kill Lazarus too.

To sum up, all of these details are important to the parable. I believe the parallels between the Rich Man and the priesthood and Jesus and Lazarus are too many to write off as coincidence. Jesus is taking several Old Testament passages and prophecies and weaving them together into a story about the judgment that is coming to Jerusalem. Jesus had said the Law and the prophets were until John. Then we see the Rich Man, the priesthood, in hades, in the grave. We see Lazarus, Jesus, the long-promised seed being comforted in Abraham's bosom and the physical seed, the Rich Man, cast out. We see both covenants in this parable. In Jesus the New and in the priesthood, the Old.

Jesus Preached to the Spirits in Prison

[18] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: [19] By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; [20] Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. [21] The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: [22] Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.
(1 Peter 3:18-22 KJV)

A popular understanding of this passage is that the ghost of Jesus, when He died and was in the tomb, went and preached the gospel to the ghosts of the dead who were disobedient in the days when Noah was building the ark. However, there is a problem with this understanding. Let's look at the word order. The passage says He was put to death, was quickened by the Spirit, then went and preached something to the spirits in prison. We see from the word order that when He preached, it was after His resurrection. So, this couldn't have been when He was dead and in the tomb. This is pretty straightforward and shows that the popular understanding runs contrary to Scripture. Now, some make the argument that the word order isn't really important. In other words, the word order could be changed and thus put the preaching prior to His resurrection. While someone may try to claim that in the English text, the Greek text does not allow for that understanding.

Verbs have tenses, past, present, and future. Verb participles also have tenses, past, present, and future. A verb participle modifies another verb. The tense of the participle is relative to the verb it's modifying. What this means is, that if the main verb is past tense, and the participle is past tense, the participle took place before the main verb. As an example, "having read the book, I went to bed." In this example, the main or indicative verb is, "went" to bed. The participle is, "having read" the book. Which took place first? From the sentence we can see that, "read the book", occurred before "went to bed." So, the participle, "having read," in the perfect tense, occurred before the main or indicative verb, "went" to bed. In the passage, having been made alive, and He went, are also past tense participles and likewise occurred before the main verb. The main or indicative verb is preached. What this is telling us is that the Greek text requires that Jesus was put to death and was made alive, prior to His going to preach. Thus, He

was alive and had been resurrected when He went to preach to the spirits in prison.

Also, the word that is translated preached is kērússō. It means to proclaim or herald. It's not the word that is usually used of preaching the Gospel, euangelizo, which means to bring good news. kērússō is used of making an announcement. We can see in the next few verses what that announcement was. Peter begins to speak of the angels who were disobedient in the days of Noah. He sidetracks a little speaking of baptism and then finishes the thought in the final verse. Let's look at the last verse, 1 Peter 3:22.

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. 1 Peter 3:22(KJV 1900)

Here we have the same issue with the indicative verb and the participles. In this verse, "is" gone into heaven, is the main or indicative verb. "Being made subject" is the participle. Thus, the angels and authorities and powers were made subject to Him before he went to heaven. We see this in other places also.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, **Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:** And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church (Ephesians 1:15–22 KJV 1900)

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. **Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord**, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11 KJV 1900)

We can see from these passages that when God raised Christ from the dead, He gave Him all authority over all things. This is what Jesus preached or proclaimed to the spirits in prison. He announced that He now had authority over all angels, authorities, and powers.

The Gospel was Preached to the Dead?

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:
5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.
6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Pet. 4:4-6 KJV)

Many will use this passage in conjunction with 1 Peter 3:13-18. They will claim that Jesus preached to the dead because verse 6 says that the gospel was preached to those who are dead. So, what are we to make of this? Was the gospel preached to the ghosts of the dead? Were they given a chance to be saved? Doesn't this prove that the dead are alive if the gospel was preached to them. No, not at all. People think that because they come to the text presupposing the dead are alive. So, what did Peter mean that the Gospel was preached to the dead. He's simply speaking of men of old. The gospel was preached to Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The word gospel simply means good news. When we think of the gospel being preached we think of Jesus being crucified and dying for sins. That's part of the gospel, however, the gospel includes much more. The good news that was preached to Abraham is the promises that God made to him. Those same promises are the good news we look forward to today. Those promises have been spoken of all through Scripture so those men of old all heard the gospel. That's all Peter is saying, that people, back in their day, heard the gospel. He's not saying that the Gospel was preached to people who were dead at the time it was preached to them. They were alive when the gospel was preached to them, but they were dead when Peter was writing the letter.

What about the Martyrs under the Altar?

[9] And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained [10] and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" [11] And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also. (Rev. 6:9 KJV)

This passage is among the seal judgments in the book of Revelation. It's argued from this passage that the souls under the altar are speaking and as such they must be alive. One thing we have to keep in mind is that the Book of Revelation is a highly symbolic book. It's full of symbolism. So, are these souls of the martyrs the ghosts of the dead speaking out? Well, we've already seen that a soul consists of a body and the breath of life from God. So, we know these cannot be ghosts or some form of disembodied human beings. So, what are we to make of this passage? Since we know the dead cannot speak, we know this is some form of figurative language. This is an allegory. This is the fifth seal. Let's consider the first four seals.

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. [2] And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. [3] And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. [4] And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. [5] And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. [6] And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. [8] And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.
(Rev. 6:1-7:8 KJV).

In each of these seals, we see a horse and a rider. Each one is given power over certain areas. One is given to conquer, another to take peace from the earth, another has a scale, the forth is named Death and hell followed him. These are clearly figurative language. Death cannot ride a horse, nor can hell follow behind. These are symbols that represent something that is a reality. So, if the first four seals are allegories it only follows that the fifth seal would also be an allegory. We also would understand it as an allegory because the dead cannot speak.

Let's look at another passage in Revelation.

[4] And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. [5] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him (Rev. 20:4-6 KJV)

Here John sees two groups of people. He sees thrones and those who sat on them and he sees those that were beheaded for their witness of Jesus and the word of God. He says these had not worshipped the beast. Remember in chapter 6 the martyrs were seeking justice and they were told they would have to wait because there were more martyrs to come.

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? [11] And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Here the souls under the altar are told to wait until the rest of their fellow servants who would be killed should be fulfilled. So, there were still more people to be martyred. These are the ones who would be martyred in the last three and a half years of the Tribulation. These are the ones we see in Revelation 20:4. Revelation 20:4 is the fulfillment of Revelation 6. Revelation 6 prophesies more martyrs to come and the martyrs in Revelation 20:4 who didn't worship the beast are those martyrs. So, we have one passage prophesying about martyrs to come and one passage that describes those martyrs. So, we can see these two passages are connected.

When John sees those on the thrones and the martyrs who haven't worshipped the beast, he calls it the first Resurrection. So, John is seeing these martyrs who haven't worshipped the beast as resurrected human beings, not as disembodied ghosts. So, if these martyrs are resurrected living people, why wouldn't we think the martyrs under the altar are also living people? Why would we say that these martyrs are resurrected people but the martyrs under the altar are ghosts? It doesn't make sense.

But, the real question is, why are they under the altar? Why does the passage say that the souls under the altar are seeking justice? To answer this we'll need a bit of a refresher. Let's look a the word soul again. The Hebrew is nephesh and the Greek is psuche. We said that these words are used in two different senses in Scripture. In a concrete sense, they mean a living being. In an abstract sense, they mean life. The word is used in a concrete sense in Genesis 2:7.

7 And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Gen 2:7 KJV)

The word soul in this passage is nephesh. Nephesh is a living soul. The word used in an abstract sense here.

11 For the **life** of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your **souls**: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the **soul**. (Lev. 17:11 KJV)

22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat *of* them alike. 23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood *is* the **life**; and thou mayest not eat the **life** with the flesh. 24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. (Deu 12:22-24 KJV)

In these two passages, the word life and soul are translated from the word nephesh. The words life and soul are the same Hebrew word. But notice what the passages say. The passage from Leviticus 17 says the life or soul of the flesh is in the blood. And the passage from Deuteronomy 12 says the blood is the life or soul. The blood is the soul. What did we see in Revelation 6? It was the souls under the altar. We could say it was the blood under the altar. So, we have blood under the altar which would make it in the ground. This blood is calling out for justice. Have we seen this before? Yes, we have.

9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper? 10 And he said, What hast thou done?

the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. (Gen. 4:9-10 KJV)

Abel's blood cried out to God. We have the same allegory here that we have in Revelation 6. We have blood crying out to God. Both cry out for justice. At both ends of the Bible, we have martyrs crying out for justice. Jesus tells us that Abel was the first martyr.

33 *Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (Matt. 23:33-36 KJV)

When Jesus speaks of all the righteous blood that was shed, He is talking about the martyrs. Why was Abel killed?

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. 8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (Gen. 4:3-8 KJV)

Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, Abel's was accepted and Cain's wasn't. Out of anger and jealousy, Cain slew Abel. He was martyred for doing good. Jesus called that generation vipers and said that all of the innocent blood that had been shed would be required of that generation. When Jesus speaks of this generation, He doesn't mean everyone about the same time as we tend to use the word. The Greek word means that which is generated. Jesus often uses it of classes of people. For instance, when He speaks of a wicked generation. He means all of those who are wicked.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matt. 12:34 KJV)

[7] Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (Lk. 3:7 KJV)

So, we have the first martyr whose blood is crying out for justice to God in Genesis and we have the blood of the martyrs in the end, in Revelation, crying out to God for justice. So what does the blood mean and why are they under the altar?

Outside of the tabernacle in the courtyard was the altar of sacrifice. This is where the Jews performed their daily sacrifices. When they had these sacrifices they cut the animal's throat and drain out the blood. Then they would sprinkle the blood on different items to purify them. The leftover blood would be poured out at the base of the altar.

[7] And the priest shall put *some* of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which *is* in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which *is at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Lev. 4:7 KJV)

[18] And he shall put *some* of the blood upon the horns of the altar which *is* before the LORD, that *is* in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which *is at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Lev. 4:18 KJV)

[25] And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. (Lev. 4:25 KJV)

Each of these passages shows that the excess blood was poured out at the based of the altar. This happened multiple times a day, day after day. After years of this practice, there would be a lot of blood built up under the altar. This blood was the blood of a sacrificed animal, it was the blood of the innocent that was slain because of the guilty. Jesus spoke of an evil generation. These are the ones who persecute and kill the righteous. At the altar at the Tabernacle, we see the blood of innocents that were slain. In Genesis, we see the blood of the innocent that was slain, and in Revelation 6 we see the blood of the innocent that were slain. We have the same picture here. The Book of Revelation is symbolic. This imagery we see in Revelation 6 should have taken the readers back to Genesis and the account of Abel. That we have Abel listed as the first martyr shows us that God has not forgotten a single martyr. It shows us that God will bring justice when the number of martyrs is fulfilled.

It should be pretty clear by all of this that the martyrs under the altar are not the ghosts of dead people speaking. We see the fulfillment of Revelation 6 in Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is speaking of resurrected living people, not ghosts. I think this pretty much covers the passages that people use to claim that the dead live on after the body dies.

Summary

I think we've pretty much covered the areas we needed to cover. We've looked at God's character. We looked at the destiny of man. We saw that the word aion cannot mean eternal. We saw that the spirit in man is that of God. It's not man. We saw that man is flesh animated by God's breath or spirit. We saw that a soul is a living being that consists of man and the breath or spirit of God. We saw that the soul cannot live on after the body dies. We saw that man is not immortal. Only the Father is immortal. We saw that it's not possible that man could suffer eternally. We saw that Hades is the grave, not a subterranean place of torment. We saw that Gehenna and not Hades is the place of torment. We saw that Gehenna and the Lake of Fire have to be the same place. We saw that Gehenna doesn't burn for eternity, but rather is restored and made holy to God. We looked at several passages that people claim prove that man can live apart from the body and saw that they actually don't prove that at all.

In summary, I think the evidence overwhelmingly proves that man not only doesn't, but can't, suffer eternal conscious torment. The evidence shows that man is a flesh being that lives only as long as God continues to give him breath. It shows that the gift of God, which is eternal life, is only given to those who believe. It's not given to the unbeliever. The only way one can suffer eternal torment is if one lives eternally. Without the promise of eternal life, man can't suffer eternally. I think the evidence clearly shows that when a man dies, he is dead until the resurrection.